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CHIEF EDITOR:
JIAN RONG
NEWS EDITOR:
HOU MINGXIN
DESIGNER:
YANG GEN



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Taking the plunge in memory of a famous swimmer

More than 300 hardy winter swimmers gathered to swim the Yangtze on the 113th anniversary of Mao Zedong's birth. The late Chairman famously swam the river himself in 1966.

CFP Photo

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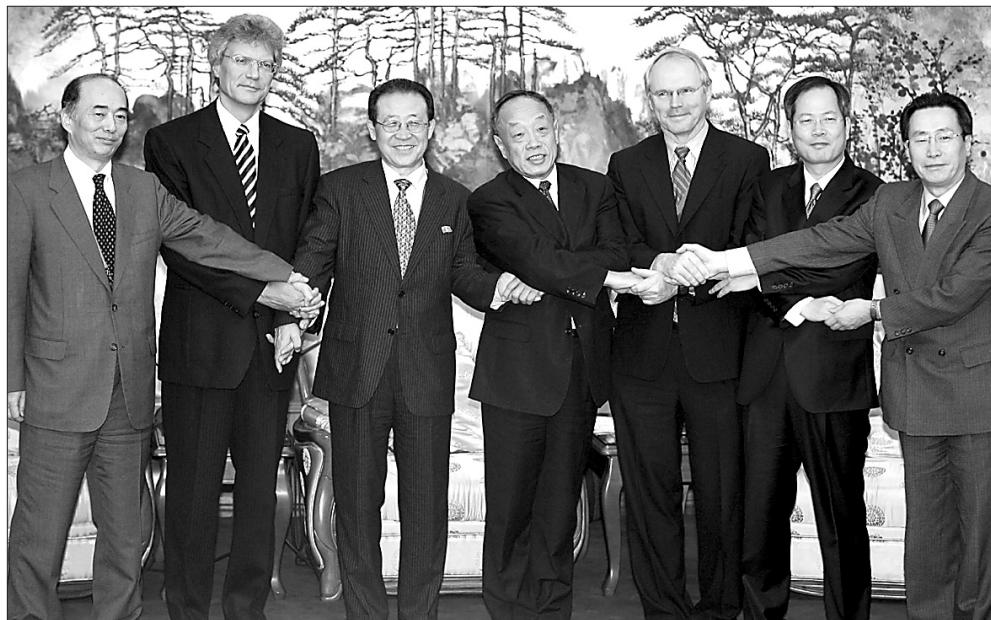
Six-party nuclear talks reach “new consensus”

The six-party talks on the Korean Peninsula nuke issue continue today despite having reached a “new consensus” through intensive negotiations.

“Six chief negotiators agreed to continue the talks on Thursday and Friday,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Jiang Yu told reporters. “We feel it is worth continuing these discussions,” Assistant US Secretary of State Christopher Hill said in his hotel late Wednesday.

Formally known as the second phase of the fifth round of talks since 2003, the dialogue resumed on Monday after a 13-month suspension and involved China, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), the US, the Republic of Korea, Japan and Russia.

The fresh consensus, according to China’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Li Zhaoxing, includes all parties reiterating the implementation of the September joint statement: a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula through dialogue and adherence to the common target of a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.



All parties want a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue through dialogue.

Xinhua Photo

On the sidelines of the six-party talks, US treasury officials and their DPRK counterparts held their second day of negotiations on financial matters.

“I thought the meeting was business-like and useful,” Daniel Glaser, US Treasury Depart-

ment’s deputy assistant secretary, told reporters Wednesday.

Glaser, who is leading the US delegation to the meeting, held five-hour talks with the President of the DPRK’s Foreign Trade Bank, O Kwang Chol, at the DPRK embassy Wednesday and Thurs-

day. Glaser did not release details of the talks, but stressed, “the DPRK should underline the concerns of the international financial society. We also discussed the possibility of meeting next month, perhaps in New York.”

(Xinhua News Agency)

Thousands of illegal coal mines shut down

By Qiu Jiaoning

China will close down 4,861 illegal coal mines by the end of 2007, among which, 2,652 will be shut down by the end of this year. This was announced by Huang Shuxian, Vice Minister of the Ministry of Supervision, in a press conference on Thursday.

During the press briefing, the authorities released results of investigations into the country’s 11 biggest accidents, which have occurred in the past two years.

Seven of them were coal mine accidents, resulting in 391 deaths and a direct economic loss of

over 137 million yuan.

“In these accidents, 283 people were punished. Among them, 117 were handed over to the judicial organs, while 166 were given Party and administrative disciplinary sanctions, including 45 who were removed from office,” Huang said. People killed in coal mine accidents this year have gone down by 21 percent compared to the same period last year, the vice minister added.

An important discovery during the investigation was the four major work hazards present

at the scenes of the accident.

Illegal production

“Some enterprises and mine owners ran production in defiance of the law and ended up in accidents because of disregard for government inspections, as well as the lives of the miners,” said the Minister of the State Administration of Work Safety, Li Yizhong.

The owner of the Xinjing Coal Mine of Zhangjiachang Township in Zuoyun County, Shanxi Province mined coal they did not have the rights to, went into production in excess of the specified pro-

duction capacity, exceeded the authorized number of miners and deliberately covered up the accident after it occurred.

Safety blind spot

The enterprises where the accidents occurred turned a blind eye to safety and operated in serious violations of rules, the minister said. The No 2 Mine in Hebi, Henan Province, which was on the list for policy-oriented bankruptcy, compromised safety management by conducting blasting operations in violation of regulations, thus triggering the gas explosion.

List out on sectors critical to Chinese economy

By Chu Meng

Private or foreign capital is only fully welcome in the country’s downstream petrochemical sector and value-added telecom services sector.

Moreover, this capital can only play a minor part in such sectors as machinery, automobile, IT, construction, iron and steel and non-ferrous metals, said the State Council this week.

The first explicit list of strategically important sectors, all of which are critical to national security and the economic lifeline of China, was released this week by the State Council.

According to the Chairman of the State-Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission, Li Rongrong, the State must have absolute control of the

following seven sectors: armaments, power generation and distribution, oil and petrochemicals, telecommunications, coal, aviation and shipping.

“We have to preserve and enhance the value of central State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs). State capital must play a leading role in these sectors, which are the vital arteries of the national economy and essential to national security. In these sectors, State-owned assets should expand in volume and optimize in structure, and some key enterprises should grow into leading world businesses,” said Li.

The commission anticipates that between 30 and 50 large business groups capable of competing globally would emerge from the country’s state businesses by 2010.

Personal check payments modernized

By Chu Meng

The People’s Bank of China is introducing a pilot program, the National Check Image Exchange System (CIS), in which people can cash checks electronically from any one of five major provinces.

Beginning next week, instead of transferring the bank check itself, the CIS transmits an image of the check, sending information to the bank where the check is to be deposited.

The six pilot provinces and cities are Beijing, Tianjin and Shanghai municipalities, North China’s Hebei Province, South China’s Guangdong Province and Shenzhen city.

Previously, checks could only be cleared within the city in which they were issued, creating a serious obstacle in an increasingly

inter-linked national economy.

Under the CIS, rather than having to present paper checks, banks can exchange digital images of the documents, saving on costs and creating a more efficient system.

By June 2007, the system will be able to handle checks across the nation and checks could be cleared nationally.

“The new system is a big step in modernizing China’s personal check payment system. It means that the average citizen’s use of personal checkbooks is very promising. It will play an active role in economic development and advance the use of checks around the country,” Xu Luode, head of the Payment System Department of the People’s Bank of China, said.

Thirty thousand overseas experts to be recruited

By Zhao Hongyi

The Ministry of Personnel is bringing in some 30,000 overseas specialists next year to address China’s talent shortage in certain sectors.

“The government is to introduce 10,000 economic and technical specialists and 20,000 education, health and science specialists in 2007,” Zhang Baolin, Minister of Personnel, told Xinhua News Agency in an interview.

Zhang said China should further explore international intellectual resources, which has provided strong support to the country’s overall development.

China has already recruited a total of 400,000 specialists from overseas, Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions and Taiwan.

At the same time, China will explore establishing a mechanism to attract Chinese currently overseas to work in the country. The plan also hopes to target foreign talents.

The ministry is preparing for the fifth round of job recruitments in Beijing slated for April 21, 2007. For more information, contact.

The Ministry of Personnel

Where: Room 50307, Building 5, Friendship Hotel, 1 Zhongguancun Nan Dajie, Haidian

Tel: 6846 8025
Fax: 6894 9527; 6846 8006

Brief news

Beijing urbanites’ disposable income up

On average, the capital’s urban area residents had 18,344 yuan (US\$2,352) per capita in disposable income in the first 11 months of this year, up 13.6 percent from the same period last year, revealed the Municipal Bureau of Statistics.

Higher SOE profits

The total profit of the country’s 161 state-owned enterprises (SOEs), owned and operated by the central government, has hit over 688 billion yuan in the first 11 months of the year, up about 19 percent on that of the same period of last year, Li Rongrong, director of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission said this week.

Over two hundred thousand cars recalled

To date, a total of 22 foreign and domestic car manufacturers across the country have recalled more than 280,000 vehicles due to flaws, the State Administration of Quality Supervision Inspection and Quarantine announced this week.

Huge sum for cultural heritage protection

The government has allocated some 150 million yuan (US\$19 million) this year to protect its world cultural heritage sites, up more than 100 million yuan (US\$13 million) on the previous year, Shan Qixiang, director of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage revealed this week.

(By Jiang Xubo)

Your chance to perform at swan lake – as a volunteer warden

By He Jianwei

Over 500 people have applied to be volunteer swan protectors at the Yellow River wetland conservation zone in Sanmenxia, Henan Province, officials from the reserve and representatives of the local media said in a joint statement last Wednesday.

The volunteers will help to observe the white swans in the wetland reserve. "The most important thing is raise awareness among local villagers of the need to protect the swans between January to March, when they over-winter in

the reserve," Sun Hongyan, from the Henan-based newspaper Orient Today, said.

Most of the applicants have been college students, but some are civil servants from Hunan, Hubei, Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces, Yuan Fang, a journalist at Orient Today said.

"As long as potential volunteers are healthy and kind to animals, they can apply no matter their age, gender, nationality or professions," Sun said.

The scenic Sanmenxia in central China's Henan province is famous

for its spectacular views of Yellow River white swans. Tens of thousands of swans migrate from Siberia and winter here, Sun said.

Orient Today reported earlier this month that some 20 swans' dead bodies were discovered along a stretch of the river in Pinglu County in Shanxi province, close to Sanmenxia. The cause of the birds' deaths remain unknown, although one local villager said poachers are suspected of poisoning the birds.

Sun said there was also a possibility that villagers had set traps

to dissuade swans from eating wheat crops.

A resident of Sanwan village in Pinglu County told the newspaper he found over 20 swan corpses when he rode his bicycle past the Yellow River wetland area.

Over the past two years, the number of white swans who over-wintering in Sanmenxia has increased, and swans can be seen fluttering their wings atop many local buildings in winter months.

Anyone interesting in volunteering can call Beijing Today on 6590 2521 for further information.

Single standard for cell phone chargers

By Jiang Xubo

Cell phone users will be able to charge their phones more easily thanks to a national standard issued this week by the Ministry of Information Industry, requiring all chargers to conform to a single format and include a USB plug. The aim is to cut the cost of new handsets, reduce electronic waste and cut resource use.

The new standard will require all brands of mobile phone to be able to share the same type of charger with a USB access, allowing users to charge handsets using a laptop computer.

The new standard is expected to come into effect in the first half of next year.

Cell phone manufacturers will then no longer sell cell phones and chargers together in a single package.

Lou Peide, secretary general of China Mobile Communications Association, estimated that the measure could save handset manufacturers nearly 2.4 billion yuan (US\$306 million) every year.

China has almost 450 million cell phone users, with up to 100 million replacing their phones every year.

Recognition for folk tradition

By Huang Daochen

A number of families who keep alive traditional folk handicrafts in Xicheng District were awarded the title of 'Family Art Museum' this week.

The 10 newly listed family museums include kite makers, weavers and other handicrafts, and also finer arts such as jade carving and shadow puppetry. It is also the first occasion that bonsai artists and antique collecting families have been awarded the title.

Wang Limei, a young woman who is physically disabled, is the head of one of the newly awarded family workshops. She is a master weaver, combining Chinese knots with various accessories to create simple and fashionable pieces. "I hope people who see my work will share my optimism and positive attitude to life," Wang said.

Xu Xiaofeng, an official from Xicheng Cultural Commission, said Family Art Museums will become reception centers for visitors from around the world during the 2008 Olympics, and places to highlight traditional Chinese folk culture.

With the addition of the new museums, there are now 25 families in Xicheng that have been granted the title.

This is the third time the Xicheng District Culture Commission has run a selection process. More than 200 families making crafts, sculptures, and egg carvings took part. The commission first launched the program last September, hoping to protect the capital's intangible cultural heritage.

Miyun haven for winter guests



Beijing's Miyun reservoir provides a habitat for migrant swans.

Xinhua Photo

Only child parents not so lonely now

By Chen Shasha

"Many of my friends don't have brothers and sisters. I never took care of a little child before, and even didn't know how to carry baby in my arms after my daughter was born," Zhang Yan, an only child born in 1980 who now has a three-year-old daughter, said. She was delighted when she recently discovered a new online community for women like her, called 'Mother's Confessional.'

Despite only being set up earlier this month, the community has already attracted over 300 members. They share stories of their children's misbehavior and ask for tips on how to bring them up. Users are mainly young mothers born in middle and late 1970s, with many of them members of the first generation born under one-child policy.

"I wasn't planning to have a baby when I got pregnant," Zhang Yan says, and she is not the only member of the community who found themselves a mother with little planning or preparation in advance.

Ma Xiaohong of Beijing Population Research Institute says 6.1 million children were given certificates noting their single-child status in 1979 when China first implemented the one-child policy, so the number of couples who grew up in one-child families could be large.

Net naysayers out for college girl CEO

By Chu Meng

Doubts have been cast on the hiring of a college student as its Asian region CEO by a US IT company.

In a story we reported last week, the company TopCoder hired Wu Yingying, a 21-year old Chinese university student, to oversee and manage its business relationships and build market presence and member enrollment throughout the greater China and Asia region.

Angry allegations were made

online that Wu's background is not nearly as impressive as stated in TopCoder's press release, and the company has been accused of commercial motivations in hiring her.

This Wednesday, Rob Hughes, President and COO of TopCoder, Inc, explained the company's reasons for hiring Wu. "TopCoder has sought to establish a presence in China for some time, thus a unique person with a highly specialized set of skills was needed."

"Yingying brings with her a graduate degree in psychology, extensive technical understanding and a deep awareness of business management, all of which will bring significant value as we expand membership and the TopCoder brand in China," he added

Jim MacAllan, TopCoder public relations director, was asked if it was all a publicity stunt. "I believe her achievements are real. There's no need for me to comment on the allegation this is a commercial promotion."

Children's fighting game becomes national craze

By Gan Tian

The individual finals of the First National Judose Tournament, a new sport developed from a Chinese children's game called *douji*, will be held in Beijing this Saturday morning at the Central University for Nationalities, making this Christmas a "manly and muscular" one for Beijing.

The children's game on which Judose is based sees boys stand on one leg and try to make their opponent fall down. The game has ancient ceremonial roots. Fighters would wear a mask and dance upon one leg to scare evil spirits away. Now professors in Beijing Sport



Judose is aggressive but safe.

Photo provided by the Judose Committee

University and experts in kinematics have developed it into a new national sport.

Many of the competitors come from colleges and universities in

different parts of China. "It reminds me of my childhood," said one competitor from southern China, "The game demands courage, skill, friendship, and strategy. You have to realize it is not just a physical contest, it's mental too."

There are three rounds in a contest, in which the attacker must make the defender fall over within one minutes.

"This is the safest fighting competition," said Wu Yanda, president of both Dedao Media and the Judose Committee, "But it is still a fighting contest and gives the audience the thrill of a fierce battle."



Fuming over 'safe' cigarettes

By Han Manman

'Ruyan,' a 'cigarette like' nicotine pipe, came under fire from media and consumers after it was found to contain dangerous amounts of nicotine. Chinese

food and drug safety officials are investigating claims that the inhaler, marketed as an aid to stop smoking, may release harmful levels of nicotine.

Wang Hai, the notorious

consumer rights advocate who detects fake products, has taken Ruyan to the court over the legitimacy of its claims. Wang said Ruyan cheated consumers by claiming to be 'safe,' 'healthy,'

'environmentally friendly' and 'the best cigarette replacement' without clinical trials or stating the product's nicotine levels.

Heated debate

A debate over Ruyan's safety started last month when state media reported an inhaler contained 18mg of nicotine, compared with the 1.2mg average found in cigarettes.

A packet of Ruyan cigarettes, including the pipe, atomizing chamber, charger, two batteries, and its nicotine-rich 'smoking ball,' is priced between 990 to several thousand yuan. When smokers take a drag, the 'smoking ball' is aerosolized and its nicotine is inhaled.

The products, though relatively expensive, were welcomed in the market. Ruyan raked in more than 1 billion yuan in domestic sales last year.

The makers, Beijing SBT Ruyan Corp., say their strongest inhaler contains a nicotine payload equivalent to a pack of cigarettes. Users are meant to gradually use weaker inhalers as a substitute for cigarettes until able to stop smoking altogether.

The company said most products to quit smoking are a kind of medicine; and smokers are treated as patients. However, Ruyan imitates every characteristic of cigarettes, from appearance to taste and nicotine content, except it will not ignite or produce tar and carbon monoxide. It is much safer than smoking.

Wang disagrees.

Wang said the main ingredient in Ruyan is nicotine, which can be addictive and cause death if too much is inhaled. Ruyan's instructions and ads neglect to mention this. Wang said the company cannot provide any official certification to prove Ruyan helps smokers quit.

The company claims Ruyan is the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommended aid to quit smoking. The WHO has publicly stated it has never recommended Ruyan. Its five recommended replacements included gums and pills, but

nothing like Ruyan.

False advertising

"People take in less nicotine when using the product, and the Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is a highly recommended way to quit smoking," Miao Nan, vice president and spokesman for SBT, said. "Nicotine is only addictive, not pathogenic, which has been proved by scientists," he said.

However his claim has been disapproved by Liu Yunqing, a professor with the school of basic medical sciences of Zhengzhou University in central China's Henan Province. "Although nicotine is not carcinogenic, it can quicken the growth of cancers. It can trigger heart disease, arteriosclerosis and stroke, and a milligram can kill a white rat," Liu told *Chengdu Business*.

Zhang Yifang, an expert with the Chinese Association of Smoking and Health, said nicotine is only addictive. It's the carbon monoxide and tar produced by smoking cigarettes that causes disease.

User opinion

A Ruyan user and four-year smoker, Zou Jie, said, "It is very difficult to quit smoking, so when I saw Ruyan's ad on TV, I wanted to try." Zou said he saw many people on the street and in restaurants using it.

"I don't like Ruyan's taste, and the product is very expensive. To be honest, I think Ruyan is just a tool for the company to earn money. I don't think it is of any use for quitting. Still, I think Ruyan is on the right track. I read an article that said the most harmful ingredient in the cigarette is tar, but Ruyan doesn't have any," he said.

But Zou believes Ruyan's blaming all the ills of cigarettes on the tar is a wicked marketing method designed to make consumers psychologically dependent on Ruyan.

The confusion is likely to last till the end of the year, when the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention will release results of its safety and toxicity tests on Ruyan.

Search for rare white dolphins will still continue

By Chu Meng

Chinese scientists said they would continue to search for the white dolphin, also known as the *baiji*, although it may be 'functionally extinct' as a 38-day search failed to find one in the Yangtze River.

"The monitoring of hot spots and small-scale searches will continue," said Wang Ding, vice director of the hydro biology institute at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and head of the team of scientists that concluded their fruitless search, Wednesday.

Hopes remain

"The efforts to search for and protect the dolphin should continue as there might be some still living. We will try every effort to save them as long as it is not confirmed to be extinct," Wang said.

Wang said humans have been successful in protecting endangered species such as David's deer, which has grown to a population of 3,000 from the verge of extinction.

"The 3,400km expedition only covered the main section of the Yangtze, and scientists only searched for the dolphins eight hours a day, which means some dolphins might have been missed," Wei Zhuo, a hydro biology engineer, said.

Wang Ding and his colleagues insist it's still too early to declare the dolphin extinct.



The last captive *baiji* Qiqi, which died in July, 2002.



Scientists continue the search.
CFP Photos

Overseas scientists believe dolphins extinct

However, foreign experts from Japan, the United States, Britain, Germany and Switzerland have already concluded the *baiji* is extinct - a victim of development, over-fishing and shipping along China's longest river.

"We have to accept the fact that the dolphin is extinct," August Pfluger, co-head of the expedition and chief of Swiss-based *baiji.org*, an environmental group dedicated to saving the dolphins, said Thursday.

"I think we may never see white dolphin again. Most scientists have reached consensus that even if there were a few specimens of the rare mammal left, the species' chances of survival

were virtually nil," Bob Pitman, a scientist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the United States said.

If the *baiji* is extinct, it will be the first cetacean to vanish as a result of human activity, as it is on top of the food chain in the Yangtze River and has no natural enemy.

The mammals share the river with ships, towboats and fishing vessels, as the Yangtze has developed into China's busiest waterway. Our monitoring results show that there are 12 vessels per kilometer on the river," Pitman said.

Chinese scientists confident

"I don't agree with them. A species is said to be extinct only after humans fail to find any in the wild for 50 years, according to the standards of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature," Wang said.

The *baiji*, unique to the Yangtze, is listed as one of the 12 most endangered species in the world. Its population dropped to below 150 in the early 1990s from around 400 in the late 1970s. A 1997 survey found only 13 sightings; the last confirmed sighting was in 2004, and the last captive dolphin, Qiqi, died in 2002.

Before the search, scientists estimated no more than 50 dolphins in the river, a prediction that appears wildly optimistic in hindsight.

Chinese blogger a Time Person of the Year



By Lev Grossman

"Chinese people don't do irony like Israelis and the English," says Wang Xiaofeng. "They don't have that making-fun-of-yourself gene." In China the blogosphere is dominated by the dronings of millions of earnest diarists, and there are still many things that can't be said in the mainstream media. Wang, however, enjoys making fun of art, culture, politics – everything that Chinese people are supposed to hold dear. Serious critiques of social

Time magazine's Person of the Year for 2006 was announced this week, but there was no big name this time. "In 2006, the World Wide Web became a tool for bringing together the small contributions of millions of people and making them matter," Time's Lev Grossman wrote.

"Seriously, who actually sits down after a long day at work and says, I'm not going to watch Lost tonight. I'm going to turn on my computer and make a movie starring my pet iguana? I'm going to blog about my state of mind or the state of the nation?"

So, "for seizing the reins of the global media, for founding and framing the new digital democracy, for working for nothing and beating the pros at their own game, Time's Person of the Year for 2006 is you."

Wang Xiaofeng, a Chinese blogger, was chosen as one of the magazine's 15 movers and shakers of the web generation and shares the honor with his fellow 'Citizens of the New Digital Democracy.'

problems or political leaders can still be dangerous in China, but serious isn't Wang's style. He might be the most respected blogger in China, precisely because he respects almost nothing.

Wang's site gets about 12,000 visitors a day. It's plastered with pictures of the Simpsons – Wang is a fan of the show, and he likes to think he looks like Bart – but there's also a bit of Borat in him too. He has posted fabricated interviews and deliberately misleading

surveys. Some people call him a cynic or a liberal; some people call him names that are shocking even by online standards of incivility.

But labels don't really fit Wang. He doesn't like isms and movements and refuses to join groups or parties. He doesn't have some big, catchall solution. "There's nothing that can be done about a lot of things in China," he says. "Most of what people do on the Internet is complain. At least we have a place to blow off some steam."



Wang Xiaofeng

Internet users criticize mandatory study of anti-AIDS textbook

Beijing (PTI), Dec 20 – Chinese Internet users have criticized a textbook specially designed for anti-AIDS compulsory education in primary and middle schools as part of the government's efforts to raise awareness against the deadly disease.

The textbook, the first of its kind in the country, will go into use in Beijing in September.

It aims to teach students about the prevention of AIDS and introduces the theory of ABC – standing for Abstinence, Be faithful and correct and consistent Condom use.

It advocates abstinence from sex till marriage and the use of condoms, and denounces cyber love, smoking and drinking. It also calls for the eradication of discrimination against people with HIV.

Though all agreed that teenage sex should be prohibited, and anti-AIDS education encouraged, Chinese Internet users questioned the textbook's support for abstinence till marriage, and its disapproval of cyber love, smoking and drinking, Xinhua news agency reported.

"According to the textbook, a person should not have sex before marriage, so why does he need condoms?" said a posting on one of China's largest portals.

Supporters of the textbook – who were in the minority – emphasized the education was designed for teenagers, who are more vulnerable and more likely to be taken advantage of in online relationships and other activities that the textbook warns about.

Beijing live poultry ban made permanent

CHINA (meatnews.com): The Beijing government has made a ban on live poultry markets permanent.

Beijing's Municipal Bureau of Agriculture said last week that the city will ban live poultry markets permanently.

According to the bureau, the move is part of its effort to comply with a newly-issued document by the State Council that calls for gradually moving live poultry markets away from urban areas in a renewed effort to combat bird flu.

Beijing suspended live poultry trading, as well as bird marketing and pigeon shooting, last November, when several outbreaks of bird flu were confirmed in neighboring provinces like Liaoning and Inner Mongolia.

In June 2006, an official announcement stated that the trade could be resumed as long as live poultry markets or shops were certified by veterinary inspection agencies. But according to the bureau, none of the shops have been certified yet.

Scientists from Chinese Academy of Sciences say poultry rearing and trade play a role in the spread of bird flu, and restricting the number of live poultry markets is essential to control the disease.

Interview with Wang Xiaofeng

By Jiang Xubo

It's no big deal. I have nothing to say about this issue. I have no idea why Time has picked me up as an example.

People kept asking me for my comments on this or that issue since I started my blog in

2004, but actually, I just concentrate on writing articles, for fun. I don't care what people think about them.

There are a lot of idiots in Internet communities, that's the only reason so many Internet users have noticed and visited my blog.

My blog has little impact on me and my life. People may come and visit me personally after visiting my blog, but I really don't care. It didn't change my life at all. As for digital grass root democracy, I have no idea what that means. You should

consult with observers, not me.

I do have the Simpsons' pictures on my blog, but it doesn't mean anything. People would still wonder why I had used Tom and Jerry instead.

– Wang Xiaofeng, Chinese blogger

ADB survey: Beijing dirtiest Asian city

By Thomas Fuller

YOGYAKARTA, Indonesia: Air pollution in Asia's worst-affected cities is up to five times as bad as in Paris, London and New York, and is five to six times the levels that the World Health Organization considers safe, according to data obtained at a conference here.

Despite tighter car-emissions standards and rising concern and awareness across Asia, many large cities, like Beijing and New Delhi, are years from bringing air pollution down to safer levels, said experts at the conference, which was sponsored in part by the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Data obtained here compares what is widely regarded by scientists as the most harmful component in air pollution: microscopic dust that embeds itself in the lungs and has been linked to respiratory disease, cancer and other potentially deadly illnesses.

A list compiled by the ADB, which measured averages for 2005, is by no means exhaustive; many polluted cities in India and China are absent. But it provides perspective on the scale and range of Asia's air pollution problem.

The dirtiest of the major cities, ranked by micrograms of particles of pollution dust per cubic meter,



Beijing suffers from serious air pollution.

IC Photo

was Beijing, at 142. By comparison, Paris averages around 22 micrograms, London 24 and New York 27. The WHO guideline is 20.

The pollutants measured in this data had a diameter of less than 10 micrometers, or about one-twentieth the size of a typical household dust particle, and are in a class known as PM10.

Outdoor air pollution causes 530,000 premature deaths in Asia every year, according to an estimate presented by Michal Krzyzanski, an air-quality expert at the WHO. For millions more, bad air is a daily annoyance.

Even after impressive improvements to air quality over the past

decade, New Delhi and Beijing, symbols of the rise of the region's two giant economies, face a gargantuan task in improving the quality of their air. Policymakers in both countries have identified pollution as a potential brake on the stunning growth of recent years.

Asia has its success stories. The Tokyo metropolitan area, with a population of 35 million, has pollution levels well below both the US and European standards. Asian cities today are following a pattern set in postwar Japan: pollution was only seriously tackled after people became sick or died from poisoned water and air.

(International Herald Tribune)

Expert comment

By Jiang Xubo

The report is overstated to some extent. Air quality in the capital has been getting better over the last several years, though we have to admit that air pollution is still quite serious. That's because the emission of air pollutants still exceeds environmental capacity.

A city's air pollution is influenced greatly by the type of industries there. London suffered from serious air pollution over 200 years ago when the country was the world's leading steel producer. Then American cities suffered the same as the US became a major steel producer.

Now China has taken a leading place in steel industry, it's natural that many Chinese cities are facing this problem, but things will improve as the capital invests more money in environment protection.

Also, pollutants including sand storms, which come from outside of Beijing, make it more difficult for the capital to improve its air quality.

– Hu Tao, Policy Research Center for Environment and Economy

'Richest Chinese' listed by Mundell

By Zhao Hongyi

Mundell, an economic magazine hosted by the 1999 Nobel economic prize laureate Robert Mundell, revealed the world's richest Chinese in a top ten list released yesterday in Hong Kong.

The award for richest went to Wang Yongqing, of the Formosa Plastics Group in Taiwan, who holds assets valued at 43 billion yuan. The runner-up is Terry Gou of Foxconn, or Hon Hai Precision Industry, also from Taiwan. Gou's wealth is estimated at 36 billion yuan. Zhang Ying, of the Nine Dragon

Paper Industries, came in third at 35 billion yuan.

Shi Zhengrong of the Jiangsu-based Suntech, a solar energy appliances producer, is the only mainlander in the top ten.

Mundell is the third 'rich list' out after *Forbes* and the independent compiler Rupert Hoogewerf released two lists earlier this year.

Prior to the Top Rich List, Mundell released China's Top Rich Couple List and Top Rich Brother List earlier this week.

Wang Xuehong and Chen Wenyi of Viatech from Taiwan

top the Rich Couple List with property valued at 15.88 billion yuan. Song Weiping and Xia Yibo from Hangzhou-based real estate developer Green Town Group are the richest mainland couple with assets valued at 6.6 billion yuan.

Six of the top ten couples are from the mainland, two couples are from Hong Kong and two are from Taiwan.

In the Top Rich Brother List, the Hong Kong-based Sun Hung Kai Properties' three brothers, Walter Kwok Ping-sheung, Thomas Kwok Ping-kwong and

Raymond Kwok Ping-luen rank first at 101 billion yuan. Sun Qiyu and Sun Qiyin of the Wanjie Group in Shandong are the richest brothers on the mainland with a net worth of 2.5 billion yuan.

The lists feed curiosity of mainlanders who are eager to know who are the richest people in China, and how they got rich.

Mundell plans to release more rich lists like the Top Rich Property Developer List and the Most Respected Rich List, according to its editor-in-chief Haisen Ting.

Beijing Olympic products go overseas

Beijing, December 19 (GamesBids.com) – Starting early next year, the Beijing 2008 Olympic Licensing Program will be taking its products global.

Tang Yonghong, Licensing Division head of the BOCOG Marketing Department said, "in the year 2006 we have got in touch with many National Olympic Committees who have expressed their willingness to sell Beijing 2008 licensed products in their countries or regions."

Tang said BOCOG has already signed a Bilateral Licensing Agreement with the US Olympic Committee that will allow Beijing 2008 licensed products to be manufactured and sold in the US, and licensed stores have already opened in Macao.

For the Christmas and New Year holidays, a group of new products at affordable prices was released recently, including "Five Blessings Olympic Games Golds," new types of mascot toys, necklaces and rings.

MSN uses Baidu in 'alliance'

By Chu Meng

Microsoft's Chinese MSN and Live websites are to use paid search advertising services provided by Baidu.com, the Nasdaq-listed internet company, under a new "strategic alliance."

The decision to rely on Beijing-based Baidu to provide paid listings in search results pages of Microsoft websites has fueled doubts about the software giant's success in China's fast-growing internet market.

The news comes less than a year since Microsoft launched AdCenter advertising system, intended to match the lucrative paid listings services operated by US search providers Google and Yahoo!, and emulated in China by Baidu.

Microsoft declined to give details on the tie-in or to say why it's chosen Baidu's paid listings over its own AdCenter.

"We believe this will help us provide new opportunities for advertisers, which will further enhance our search business in China," the company said in an email.

MSN has struggled to make an impact in China since launching its Shanghai-based joint venture in May 2005. It ranks ninth among the country's portals, according to Chinese market research company iResearch.

Westinghouse deal kicks off nuclear energy drive

Beijing, December 20 (AFP) – China's decision to buy four nuclear power reactors from Westinghouse represents a major step in an ambitious drive to boost the country's atomic energy production.

In March this year, China's cabinet approved blueprints to bring nuclear energy capacity from the current level of 9,600 megawatts to 40,000 megawatts by 2020, or about four percent of its overall energy production.

The deal for the third-generation 1,000-megawatt reactors

marks only the beginning of the production drive.

"The target will require China to build some 32 nuclear power units, each capable of generating at least one gigawatt (1,000 megawatts), over the next 15 years," Zhang Guobao, vice minister of the National Development and Reform Commission, said.

China currently has nine nuclear energy reactors in commercial operation with two more Russian-made units expected to go on-line by the end of March 2007. France has built four

nuclear reactors in China, while Canada has built two atomic power units.

China announced this year plans to start building a nuclear power station in the nation's northeastern Liaoning province next year that consist of two 1,000-megawatt reactors. It was unclear if those reactors will be imported or Chinese-made.

Meanwhile, local reports said more plants are in the pipeline for the provinces of Fujian, Shandong, Anhui, Hunan, Hubei, Jiangxi, Sichuan and Shanghai.

Trans-Atlantic merger



New York police officers patrol in front of the New York Stock Exchange, Thursday, December 21.

Shareholders of the stock exchange support a tie-up with European stock market operator Euronext.

NYSE announced the initiative Wednesday which will create the world's biggest intercontinental bourse.

AP Photo

Olympics hotels online booking

Beijing, December 19 (en.ce.cn)

– The Beijing tourism administration will open an online accommodation booking center before March next year for visitors to the 2008 Olympic Games.

The Beijing Municipal Tourism Bureau's website, bjta.gov.cn, will be linked to the official website of the 29th Olympic Games, Xiong Yumei, deputy director of the bureau, said.

Nasdaq, NYSE to open China office

Beijing, December 19 (AP) – China and the US agreed to allow Nasdaq and New York Stock Exchange to open formal business offices in China. But no timetable is available yet.

The Nasdaq Stock Market Inc. has a representative office in Beijing but that status restricts the scope of its activities, barring companies from doing such things as signing contracts.

CITIC's Kazakh oil deal in doubt

Shanghai, December 19 (AFP) – CITIC may be forced to sell to Kazakhstan part of the stake in oil assets it is trying to buy from Canada's Nations Energy Co in order to secure the deal, the *Wall Street Journal* has reported.

State-owned China International Trust and Investment Corp and Nations Energy are aiming to sign an agreement on the sale of US\$1.91 billion dollars worth of assets in Kazakhstan.

eBay confirms JV with Tom Online

San Francisco, December 19 (Reuters)

– eBay Inc confirmed it is forming a joint venture with Tom Online as the online auction giant switches strategies for tapping the promising China market where it has so far struggled.

eBay will invest US\$40 million and have a 49 percent stake in the venture, while Tom Online will invest US\$20 million and have a 51 percent stake.

BenQ to shut Beijing center

Taipei, December 15 (Reuters)

– BenQ Corp, the world's sixth-largest mobile phone vendor, said it will close a product development center in Beijing, furloughing 400 workers, as part of restructuring plans after its German mobile unit filed for insolvency.

"We are now in the process of telling the workers about our plan to shut down the center. The plan should take effect within a few days," said BenQ spokeswoman Colleen Ho.

Dell reported to acquire PC unit

Taipei, December 16 (digitimes.com)

– Dell is reportedly interested in acquiring the PC business unit of Beijing-based Founder Electronics for US\$800 million.

The negotiations between the two companies, which started in May, are already close to the final stage, according to local reports.

Taken together, Dell and Beijing Founder would control a 23 percent share of China's PC market.

Bridgestone's 100th 'car wings'

By Chen Shasha

Bridgestone (China) Investment Co Ltd opened its China's 100th 'car wings' in Nantong, Jiangsu Province.

Car Wings is a retail franchise chain that Bridgestone is building in China to market its tires and related products and services, ranging from car repair to cosmetics.

According to Hiroshi Yoshizane, general manager PSR sales department, the retail franchise of Bridgestone (China) is divided into four levels: common retail store, 'Boss' store, BTS and car wings, with car wings at the top. In car wings, each store has a monthly goal of 300 tires sold with 80 percent being Bridgestone brand.

Association for oil circulation established

By Annie Wei

China's national association for oil circulation, consisting of 130 private enterprises, was founded with the opening of China's oil market as part of the country's commitment to the World Trade Organization.

He Jihai, chairman of the Petroleum Circulation Committee Under the China General Chamber of Commerce (CGCC) said the organization will allow petroleum enterprise members – private, state-owned and foreign-owned – to be better represented and to have a voice in national oil decisions.

The committee announced they would function as in providing service and handling government relations for petroleum enterprises.

Communist Party branch set up in Wal-Mart's China HQ

By Huang Daohen

Wal-Mart has finally allowed employees at its China headquarters in Shenzhen to set up a Communist Party of China (CPC) branch, signaling a breakthrough for the government to expand its influence among Fortune-500 companies in the country.

Last month, the company allowed the establishment of a branch of China's official trade union there.

According to the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU), the first union branch at the com-

pany was established in Jinjiang, Fujian Province, in July.

Since then at least 60 other Wal-Mart outlets in China have set up union branches, with a total of more than 6,000 members.

Several of Wal-Mart's Chinese stores already have Communist Party branches. The first was set up on August 12 this year in the northeastern city of Shenyang, Liaoning Province.

The Party branch there has said it would not interfere in store management.

Many foreign companies in

China already have Party branches, either officially or unofficially.

According to the CPC Constitution, every Party member should belong to a branch, cell or other specific unit of the CPC to participate in regular activities. Grassroots Party organizations must be formed if there are at least three full CPC members.

Wal-Mart Stores Inc entered the Chinese market in 1996. It now has 67 stores in 34 Chinese cities with over 30,000 employees. The company has few unions elsewhere in its worldwide operations.

Comments:

The opening of the party branch was a routine matter. We could understand that Party members and the Party have routinely organized branches in enterprises in China, and we respect their right to do so.

— Beth Keck, spokesperson, Wal-Mart headquarters

Quite a few of our associates (employees) are Party members already, so they have a right to establish branch organizations. I do not know whether Wal-Mart would have any formal interaction with the branch or whether its establishment would affect operations. However, allowing the setting up of a union and Party branch fully demonstrates Wal-Mart China's sincerity in meeting local requirements and complying with China's regulations.

— Jonathan Dong, spokesman, Wal-Mart China

I think the branch's function would be to promote better business. The Party and Youth League

branches will encourage members to play a role in their job, and be helpful to business development. The groups will not interfere with management or operations.

— Chen Lie, branch secretary, Wal-Mart Shenyang branch

The establishment of the branch by Wal-Mart China marked a success in promoting the work of the CPC within foreign companies and will surely help encourage the creation of more CPC organizations in foreign-financed companies.

— Wang Suiming, head of the CPC Shenzhen City Committee

In China, branches of the official trade union usually represent the work force of a single company or outlet, rather than an industry, and they have been allied with management and the ruling party. I think that's the major difference between our union and unions overseas. To make foreign company investment in China a success, both should learn to understand each other.

— He Dawei, from China Academy of Social Science

I felt good when they set up a union branch, and later the Party organization, as I am a full Party member myself. There are more than 10 party members here and we can get together to study every week. I think it will also help the company develop better.

— Liu Jing, employee, Wal-Mart Beijing Shijingshan branch

China's 70 million-member Communist Party and its affiliated All-China Federation of Trade Unions are trying to expand their presence in foreign companies to keep pace with a fast-changing society amid capitalist-style economic reform.

— Associated Press

The infiltration process also shows a significant change in the Communist Party. It has played an important role in state-owned enterprises, but began to attract private entrepreneurs and to enhance its position in the private sector.

— The Wall Street Journal Online



Wal-Mart is doing big business in China.

CFP Photo

China: a Great Power?

Global Voice Online

China Central Television (CCTV) recently aired a documentary series, The Rise of Great Powers, which has been the subject of keen discussion on the Internet and in traditional media, with debate focused on whether China is a rising great power.

The 12-episode documentary began by looking back to the 15th century when the Age of Discovery brought prosperity to Spain and ended with the rising of the latest modern empire, the United States. Through interviews, historical reenactments and computer-generated special effects, it tried to teach China and its people, a rising nation-state, on how to learn from the experience of former and current global powers.

China used to be one of the mightiest empires and is one of the oldest civilizations in the world, but its modern history from the middle of 19th century is a tale of disgrace, disorder and chaos.



Many Chinese dream of China becoming a great power again.

CFP Photo

Only with the economic boom of recent years, built on a huge yet cheap labor force, did China manage to become an influential force in the international arena.

But will a renaissance of Chinese Culture necessarily follow as a

result of economical growth? Given the prevailing attitude of overheated nationalism and outspoken patriotism, is the resurgence of a powerful Middle Kingdom a realistic prospect, or just the daydreams of a jingoistic public?

Comments:

There are some long-term and upright means to make people feel happy and satisfied: they should have adequate food and clothing, and they should not need to go bankrupt in order to provide education and health care for their family.

If that were the case, citizens would feel happy and satisfied, at least the Chinese would, I can guarantee.

— Darlene Hung

The happiness of its citizens is the top priority of the government, whether it is a big or small country. Only a Spartan country would reduce its citizen's happiness to the minimum and amplify the interest of the state.

History has shown this doesn't work and such a country would not develop further. It doesn't matter if you are a Great Nation.

— Del Valle

Statistically, the Chinese economy is doing really well, and keeps getting stronger, but we should acknowledge that China is a strange dichotomy: robust purchasing power for luxuries in a fast growing economy but without strong domestic demand; a country creating many new laws and regulations while its legal system still badly needs to be improved.

— Li Ruihong

It is fashionable now to talk about rising of a great power. What is the symbol of being a great or a super power? You should first be economically powerful, your GDP ought to be half that of the world's total.

— Audie T

(By Huang Daohen)

Hollywood superstar unveils The Painted Veil in Beijing



Edward Norton (third from right) stands with the Chinese crew of *The Painted Veil*.

Photo by Wang Xiaoxi

By Gan Tian

Directed by John Curran and starring Edward Norton, Naomi Watts, Liev Schreiber and Wong Chau-Sang, the big movie, *The Painted Veil*, will simultaneously debut in Beijing, Shanghai, New York and Los Angeles on December 29. Leading actor Edward Norton arrived in Beijing Thursday for a press conference.

Norton was very interested in China. "It was a very unusual script with a lot of potential. It's unusual to have a film set in such a faraway place and time.

Just the idea of going to China made me so excited," he said at the conference.

Norton thought highly of the Chinese actors and actresses, "For the Western cast members, including John Curran and I, working with the Chinese crew has been an exciting and educational experience. When we came here, we had no idea about what would happen, but it's been a great experience. Chinese film has a great tradition."

When asked which was more difficult, falling in love with Naomi

Watts or learning Chinese, he joked, "Everyone falls in love with Naomi Watts, but her boyfriend was there so he kept me focused on my Chinese." He mentioned Naomi sent him an email saying she was sad she couldn't come to China because she's busy with her next film.

Norton won the Golden Globe for Best Actor in a Supporting Role and received an Oscar nomination for Best Supporting Actor for his performance in *Primal Fear* (1996). In 1998, Norton earned his second Oscar nomination when he gained 30 pounds of muscle

and transformed his look into that of a skinhead for his role as a violent white supremacist in *American History X*. In 1999 he starred in *Fight Club* and in 2000 he directed *Keeping the Faith*.

The Painted Veil was adapted from W. Somerset Maugham's novel. In the movie, Norton, playing Walter, and Naomi Watts, as Kitty, star in a story of a young English couple who marry for the wrong reasons and relocate to Shanghai, where the wife falls in love with someone else. It's Hollywood's first Made-in-China movie.

Stuntman tumbles into coma

By Han Manman

Hollywood stuntman Oldrich Svarousky, 48, a Filmkast stunt group member, is still in a coma after a failed stunt last Saturday in Shanghai. Hospital officials say his brain stem has been seriously injured, and he is in critical condition.

Although the stunt's organizer claimed Svarousky's condition is stable, Yu Fei, a doctor in Shanghai No 10 People's Hospital disagrees. "Svarousky is not as stable as the report claims. He's still in a coma and in emergency care," Yu said.

Yu refused to disclose the details, but said Svarousky's condition is complicated and needs further tests before the full extent of his injuries will be known.

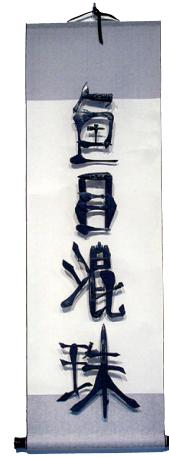
"This is the first time Svarousky has received such a severe injury in more than 20 years of stuntman work," Zhou Li, a worker for the Hollywood-based Filmkast Stunt Group, said.

"We regret what's happened, but it's (being a stuntman) a dangerous game," Lu Pin, one of the performance sponsors, said.

Svarousky, a stand-in actor in many Hollywood movies, including *Men in Black* and *Taxi Driver*, fell off a running car as he tried to jump through rings of fire in a film snippet staged at Zhabei Stadium last Saturday. He fell headfirst onto the pavement and was taken to No 10 People's Hospital immediately, where he has been in a coma since.



Svarousky fainted after falling headfirst onto the pavement. IC Photo



Australian artist's calligraphy complex

By He Jianwei

"The real Great Wall of China is its writing system. To learn to read and write in Chinese is an extremely daunting prospect for a foreigner, but one that can open the door to an understanding of the culture like no other," Barnaby Chambers, an Australian artist, said in the opening ceremony of "3n Visual Art in Multi-cultural Vision," Saturday, at Beijing Today Art Museum.

"3n Visual Art in Multi-cultural Vision" is a visual exhibition planned by three Chinese artists. The theme of this year is "Lips and Teeth: correlation of this world."

"Three" represents all the three Chi-

nese artists, including Xing Junqin, Liu Xuekai and I," Wang Huanqing said at the opening ceremony. "N" means the geometric serial amplification of questions due to the enrollment of artists with different cultural background."

Chambers is one of the culturally diverse artists in this year's exhibition. He displayed calligraphy of several Chinese idioms joined together with dismantled model war planes.

All the idioms such as 'being diametrically opposite,' 'a moment's relief or pleasure can bring endless suffering,' and 'act as the claws of an evil man' are related with the wars that happened this year, Barnaby said.

"While I try to understand all the Chinese idioms I use in my work, there is inevitably a lot of history and assumed cultural understanding that can be almost impossible for me to fully grasp. I find that discussing the meanings of these idioms and trying to understand something so culturally specific to China are as important to me as the work itself," he said.

Throughout his career, Barnaby has spent lengthy periods living, working and exhibiting in countries from Indonesia to West Africa, including thirteen months in Kunming, Yunnan Province. In Kunming his fascination with Chinese characters and writing began to influence his art.

Fascinated about China

By Jackie Zhang

Nine British teenagers are visiting Beijing this week after their excellent performance at the annual Chinese Speaking Competition for Schools in Britain held in London last month.

For most of them, it's their first time to see a real Chinese city.

Performing a Chinese story

Dream of the Red Chamber (Hongloumeng) is a famous Chinese novel. It tells a story of three renowned families' decline in Qing Dynasty. The story is famous mostly because of the love story between Lin Daiyu and Jia Baoyu of the Jia Family.

Six English girls from the Grey Coat Hospital School in London performed the scene showing the first time Lin Daiyu came to the Jia Family in Chinese and won first prize.

"We chose this story because we all knew the book and we all liked the story," said Alice Clark-Edwards, who played Wang Xifeng, another woman in the story.

"There are many people in the play. Since we chose the scene where Lin first came to the Jia Family, most of our words were introductions," Mercy Welbeck said.

The girls spent about a month preparing for the play. "We used our spare time after school to prepare, and when we were told we won first prize and won a trip to China, we screamed," Clark-Edwards said. "When I came home and told my mother, she cried too."

Fascinated with Chinese

Abigail Salvesen from Edinburgh, Scotland and Nishat Ali from London were the winners in Language Ability. In the competition, each gave a prepared, two-minute speech in Chinese, answered general questions about China and translated sentences into Chinese.

"I started to study Chinese five years ago," Abigail Salvesen, 13, the first Scottish student to win the prize, said. "When I was four, I saw Chinese characters in one of my mother's books. It was a Chinese book translated into English with some characters - they were so cool. I tried to draw them, but was confused and didn't know what they meant."

Nishat Ali, 16, came to China for the first time in 2004 and stayed in Hangzhou. "I love Chinese culture and the cities. My first trip to China was the main reason I love Chinese language and want to study it," she said.

She visits Chinese websites often to search for Chinese songs online. "I like Jay Chou. I bought one of his CDs yesterday, but his songs are difficult to understand. He sings too fast. I can sing Zhou Huajian's *Pengyou*."

Backgrounds

The Chinese Speaking Competition for Schools in Britain is arranged by the British Council and HSBC Global Education Trust. This is its fourth year.

"Studying Chinese is new in the UK," Achsah Carter, program officer of China and world links from British Council London, said. "Students used to study European languages like French, Spanish and German ... There are many boys and girls choosing to study Chinese now."

UNDP to support 'Green' Games

By Qiu Jiaoning

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched the China Environmental Awareness Programme (CEAP), a project to help China meet its Green Olympic goals, Tuesday.

The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games has been designated the 'Green Olympics,' where China's rich natural resources, biodiversity and commitment to environmental protection will be on display. To support the initiative, UNDP will partner with the Beijing Organizing Commit-

tee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG) to promote Green objectives.

"The US\$3.5 million budget for the project will be used as a 'seed' fund to get the CEAP activities started," Hanawa said. "In order to achieve the ambitious goal, the budget will be used to support a very visible national campaign to communicate environmental messages to the public."

UNDP will provide assistance to mobilize fuel-cell buses for the transport of athletes

within the Olympic compound and Beijing. This will raise public awareness on zero-emission solutions to public transport and China's commitment to renewable energy technologies, Yu Xiaoxuan, director of the Environment Department of BOCOG, said.

UNDP will also support ways to integrate recyclable materials and energy conserving technologies into the design of facilities within the International Zone of the Olympic Compound. In this connection, UNDP is cur-

rently searching for potential partners to help support activities to increase use of renewable energy and energy efficient technologies in building design, and to showcase best practices in eco-design and green procurement.

Besides, UNDP will help establish an education center in the International Zone of the Olympic Compound as a way to increase visitor awareness on the best practices to achieve biodiversity conservation and water management goals.

Fire temporarily halts Cuban visa application

By Jiang Xubo

The Cuban embassy has temporarily suspended visa applications since a fire broke out, Wednesday. Officials have not decided when services will resume.

Embassy staff were evacuated safely thanks to a prompt alarm, and all have returned to work. No one was killed or injured.

The fire started in an office in a two-story building in the embassy at 1:30pm. Firefighters put it out about one hour later, after some 30-square-meters of the office had burned. Firefighters said some of the shelves had burned, but there was "no heavy damage."

Artist donates massive painting to UN

By Qiu Jiaoning

Internationally acclaimed master artist Huang Yongyu donated his massive painting *World Peace* to the United Nations (UN) in Beijing, Monday. As a call for peace, the painting echoes Picasso's *Guernica* which hangs at the entrance to the UN Security Council Chambers in New York.

"It is a call to commit to the ideals of peace and development," Khalid Malik, UN's resident coordinator in China, said at the unveiling. "The message of this extraordinary painting represents the very principles of what the UN was founded upon, and the message continues to resonate today. A commitment to peace is a commitment to human development and security," he said.



Huang Yongyu's *World Peace*
Photo provided by Wu Tao

Measuring about two-by-three meters, the painting shows cranes swooping over lotus flowers and is decorated with Chinese characters

that read, "Let no one in the world be left in hunger or fear. No Fear. No Hunger. Let the birds and flowers of peace bring prosperity to all people in the world."

World Peace will be a valuable addition to the UN's art collection, which includes works such as the sculpture *Non-Violence* by Karl Fredrik Reutersward of a gun barrel tied in a knot, and *Single Form* by Barbra Hepworth, both standing outside the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Huang's painting is hung on the wall of the large conference room at the UN Compound in China. A special silver plaque, presented to him to acknowledge his contribution, will be hung next to his painting.

Hungarian Deputy Minister visits China

By Huang Daochen

At the invitation of the Ministry of Commerce of China (MOC), Dr Garamhegyi Ábel, Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Economy and Transport of Hungary, visited China from December 17-20.

Yu Guangzhou, Vice Minister of Commerce, met Garamhegyi at the MOC this Monday. The two presided over the 14th Sino-Hungary Joint Economic Committee and signed the meeting's minutes.

"Hungary, a country in the heart of Europe, is eagerly awaiting investors from China," he said. Hungary plans to hold a Hungarian Economy Year in China next year. Garamhegyi visited Tianjin, Tuesday, to conduct an investigation on the city's economic development zone model.

Hungary has joined efforts with China to steadily promote bilateral economic and trade relations since President Hu Jintao's visit in June 2004. In the first 10 months of this year, Sino-Hungary bilateral trade volume exceeded last year's total volume to reach US\$3.16 billion, an increase of 37.4 percent over last year.

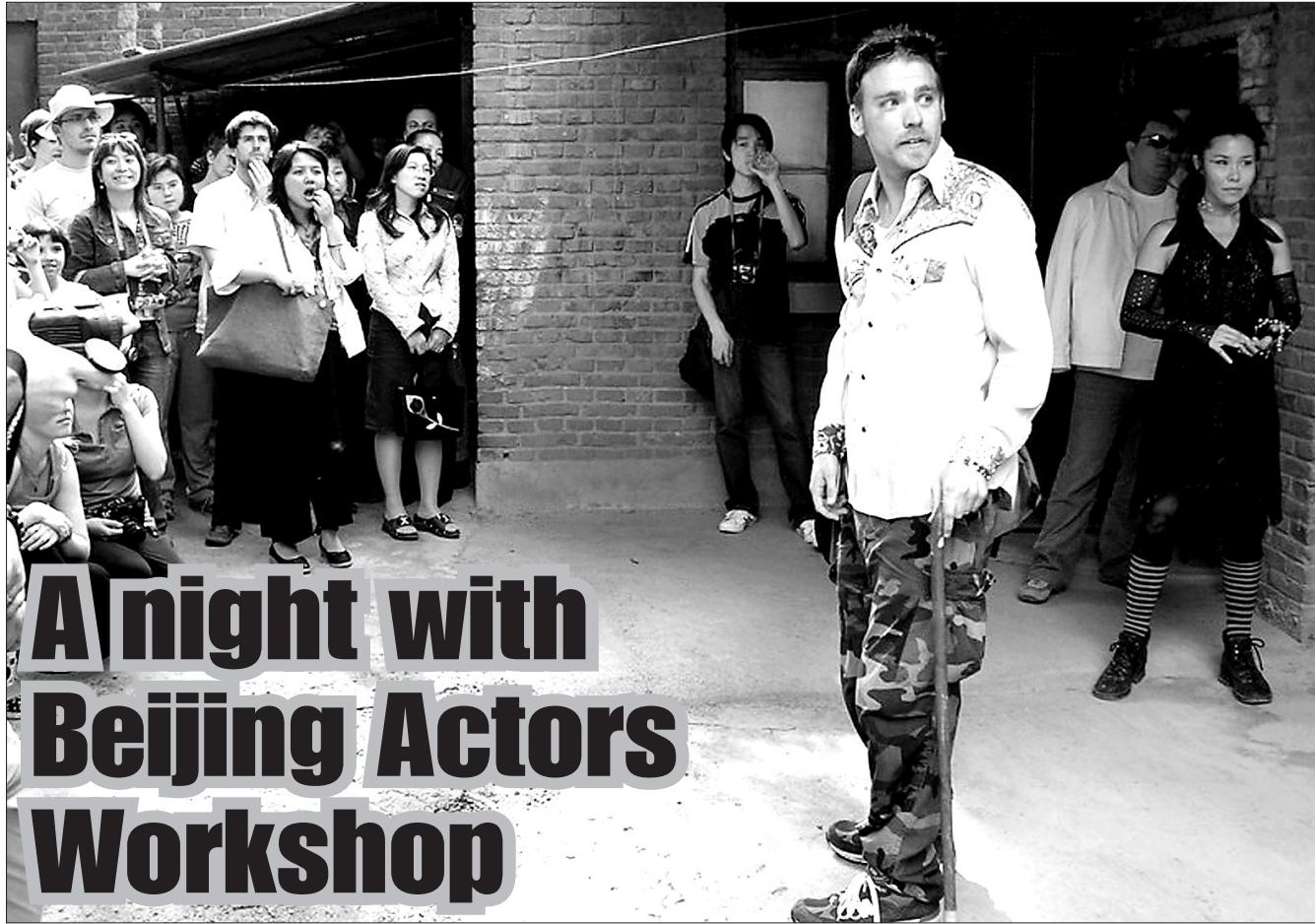


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A night with Beijing Actors Workshop

Tom Clouse acting in a 798 event

By Annie Wei

It's after eight in the evening on a Tuesday. A group of young people are hanging out at the tiny second floor of the Drum and Bell Tower Square's Xingjiang Music Bar. It's a typical night for the Beijing Actors Workshop.

Founded by several expats almost two years ago, the workshop aims to build a platform for people who are interested in acting or writing. Two weeks ago, the workshop put on a public performance in this small bar and around 150 people showed up to watch.

On the average, 25 participants come and join the workshop every Tuesday. They do structured improvisation, scripted scene work in English and Chinese, method acting, aided exercises and theater

games. There's no stress about getting involved; everyone seems friendly and easygoing.

Patrick Pearce, one of the founders, is a huge presence in the workshop. When there's a newcomer, he takes the extra effort to make the person feel welcome.

"This is not an acting class. As a workshop, the point is to involve people who can bring in ideas and who are willing to prepare before and during the workshop to develop ideas," Vivian Wong, a Taiwanese woman who works for an art gallery, said. Wong was one of the group's first participants. "It's a great experience and I think it definitely helps with people's confidence."

"I think it's fun," Chen, a guy from Korea said, "Also, I want to improve my English." From peo-

ple's accents, it's not difficult to tell they come from different countries: the US, Canada, France and, of course, China. However, only Chinese and English are used for acting and communicating.

The workshop is free of charge. The bar owners think it will be great, though, if participants buy food or drink from them for the space they provide. And during the break, some go downstairs to order refreshments.

The workshop is normally divided into three sessions. First is the theater game, then acting methods, and last is the solo performance. During the practice session, participants are grouped together to work on their speaking skills. Three persons supervise the activity.

The solo performance is an interesting affair. While every-

one is seated on the floor in a circle, one person goes to the middle to act out a certain scene. Afterwards, the viewers will give their comments, which are meant to inspire the actor to do better.

"We think it's an inspired way to bring together people who like acting and people who like writing," Pearce said. "Therefore, we have participants who just want to try, as well as actors who want to improve their acting skills."

For more information, log on to bjactorsworkshop.googlepages.com.

Beijing Actors Workshop

Where: Xinjiang Music Bar (Jiangjinjiu), No 2 Zhongku Alley, Zhonglouwan Hutong, Gulou, Xicheng

When: every Tuesday 8-11 pm
Tel: 8405 0124

Events

Christmas Party for foreign students

Hiro, Tony Valentine, Children's Sky and more bands will attend the live music party.

Where: 13 Club, No 161 Lanqiyang (west of Tsinghua University's south gate), Haidian

When: December 22, 7pm
Cost: 30 yuan at the door; 20 yuan pre-sold
Tel: 8262 8077

Charity work

Friends of Nature will hold their first garage sale on January 20. If you support environmental protection, the NGO welcomes donations.

When: until January 5
Tel: 6559 7283 ext 812/807
Email: yujin@fon.org.cn, lijian@fon.org.cn

English-language speed dating

Fifteen males and 15 females will be selected, all at least 20 years old. Each person will have 5 mins to talk with each participant of the opposite sex. A great way to meet new friends and possibly find love.

Where: Mingshang Dasha Room 503, No 55 Suzhou Jie (next to west gate of Renmin University), Haidian

When: December 22, 8pm
Cost: 30 yuan for registration
Email: poonam3123@hotmail.com

Christmas and New Year Party

Instructors from the US will give special dance lessons and then hold a performance, followed by a salsa, merengue and Latin dance party.

Where: Golden Dancing Academy, No 7 Chongwenmen Wai Dajie, Chongwen

When: December 23, 7pm-12am
Admission: 299 yuan at the door; 199 yuan pre-sold (ticket includes a Christmas cap, dinner, coffee and soft drink)

For more information: goldendancing.com

Dumpling Day: dumpling class and feast

Celebrate the Dongzhi Chinese festival with Chinese friends by making dumplings. A top Chinese chef will demonstrate how to make 8 kinds of jiaozi.

Where: Ruya Restaurant, No 43 Chengfu Lu (300 meters west of Wudaokou Railway Station), Wudaokou, Haidian

When: December 23, 5am-5pm
Cost: 49 yuan (for materials, drinks and demonstration)
Tel: 8286 5356
Email: ewclub@126.com

Culture shock forum

Where: Room 423, China Foreign Affairs College, No 24 Zhanlanguan Lu, Xicheng

When: Saturday, December 16, 2:30-4:30pm
Email: graceyali@163.com
Tel: 6899 6318 ext 803

(By He Jianwei)

Take the bus and save money



Passengers queue for monthly bus passes, due to be phased out in a new transport plan.

Photo by Zhang Bin

By Gan Tian

The Beijing Communication Committee on Monday came out with a series of new traffic policies aiming to make public transportation more affordable to the public. The directive said that next year, the city government will invest over 13 billion yuan more than it did this year on the bus system, in order to cut bus ticket prices.

Easy on the wallet

Beginning January 1, all bus rides will start at one yuan, said Li Jianguo, Vice President of the Beijing Communication Committee. At present, some buses charge passengers a minimum fare

of two yuan.

Under the new scheme, monthly passes, will no longer be sold. Instead, student and adult bus cards will be offered: students will enjoy an 80 percent discount and other card-holders 60 percent. (The current bus cards only offer a 20 percent discount.) The new card may be used on all of the city's 447 bus lines, except for buses that start with the number nine. For the latter type of buses, each person gets 20 percent off the standard price.

As for the bus lines, which currently accept monthly tickets, next year, they will only charge 0.4 yuan, regardless of travel distance.

Getting a card

If you want to use a bus card, you can get one at the service stands with blue marking, near big bus stations. The main service stands are at the Dongzhimen, Andingmen and Dongdaqiao bus stations.

You pay a 20-yuan deposit for the card and put in as much credit as you want. You can return the card anytime and you get your money back – as long as it's not a student card.

If you're a student, you need to present your school ID and a photo when you purchase your card. The card costs a non-returnable 20 yuan. You then take the card to your school, ask for their seal on it as proof

that you are, indeed, a student. Only then can you put credit in the card and begin using it.

Reasons to celebrate

Many foreigners consider buses a cheap mode of transportation. Well, next year, there's even more reason to celebrate. Many foreign students live in Wudaokou, Haidian District, but they often hang out in CBD or Sanlitun, Chaoyang District. Taking a taxi from Wudaokou to Sanlitun, costs at least 40 yuan. If you take an air-conditioned bus, you'll only have to shell out 10 yuan, but can go as fast as a cab. Next year, the trip will be even cheaper: less than two yuan if you have a bus card.

ASK Beijing Today

I'm going to be living in Beijing for a while and want to know the going rate for tailor-made clothes.

It's difficult, however, to give you an accurate figure without knowing the design you want, the materials you plan to use, not to mention the tailor you'll choose.

A pair of men's woolen trousers cost around 200 yuan on the third floor of 3.3 Fashion Shopping Mall. A long woolen winter outfit for women costs about 600 yuan at the Yaxiu Market, near Sanlitun. If you go to a small tailoring shop in an area for locals, the price will likely be lower.

I found it strange that real estate agents did not charge me when I used their services to look for an apartment. My Chinese friends, though, did not get the same treatment.

Beijing Today talked to a real estate agent and he explained the situation this way: "When we deal with foreign clients, our fee is included in the rent we quote. For example, the apartment owner expects 4,000 yuan per month. When a foreigner comes to check it out, we tell the person the monthly rent is 4,500 yuan. If it's a local client, we might tell the person the owner wants 4,000 yuan per month, while our service fee is 4,000 yuan. However, some changes have recently been made. We still charge a month's rent in fees, but it's now shared by the apartment owner and the tenant."

I want know how to pay monthly bills such as electricity, phone, water and gas. What's the easiest way to pay these bills?

Most decent apartments have their electricity, phone and water bills go through the bank system. That means you'll first need an electricity and gas card, which you take to the designated bank and deposit money into over the counter. Water does not come with a card; someone from the water bureau will go to your apartment to check the water meter and then invoice you. Both the water and phone bills are paid through banks.

The easiest way to pay on your own, without waiting in line at the bank, is to use the ATM machine.

Welcome email your questions to: weiyi@ynet.com

(By Wei Ying)

BEIJING TODAY

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English

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Norwegian and Chinese collaboration on stage



Hunting for

Norwegian and Chinese artists re

By Annie Wei

Since its 1914 debut in China, Ibsen's *A Doll's House* has become one of the most well-known western plays among Chinese audiences. For the 2006 Ibsen Year in China, the classic has been adapted in *Hunting for Nora*, a story combining modern dance and Chinese folk art. With the set designed by a renowned professor of Chinese traditional paper cutting and the music composed by one of Norway's most famous modern composers and music DJs, the play's overall effect was stunning.

For the Beijing performance, Teater Ibsen, a public theater group in Norway, brought over two dancers from Norway's leading modern dance company Carte Blanche. Three other Norwegian freelance performers and five female dancers from the Beijing Modern Dance Company also joined the play. This is the first time the Beijing Modern Dance Company worked with Teater Ibsen, which was established in 1975 and does about 250 performances before 30,000 people annually.

Paper cutting design

When Un-Magritt Nordseth, an eminent Norwegian choreographer, first planned on interpreting the play through modern dance, she immediately thought about how to combine it with elements of Chinese culture. At the beginning, her group merely planned to incorporate Chinese elements in the stage design. However, in 2004, she met Qiao Xiaoguang, a respected figure in Chinese paper cutting from the Central Academy of Fine Arts, and plans took on a life of their own.

A brochure about the life and art of China's folk paper cutting stirred the Norwegian artist's interest in Qiao's work. The book introduced women paper cutting artists from the countryside and their splendid works. Qiao recalled the first time he met Mrs Nordseth and Mrs Katrine Tolo, the play's costume designer. Qiao said that at the time, he was busy working on paper cutting for a UNESCO project. Although their first meeting was not long, both sides came to the understanding that it would be very meaningful to use traditional Chinese paper cutting for the play's stage design.

"*A Doll's House* is one of the world's most frequently performed plays. In 2001 it was included on the UNESCO list of heritage texts under the program World Memory," Nordseth said. "The art of paper cutting is now also under consideration for the UNESCO list. In this way, western ideals of personal liberty combine with a Chinese sense of tradition to create a new artistic expression, revitalizing Ibsen's view of what is most important in our mutual, collective memory: human dignity."

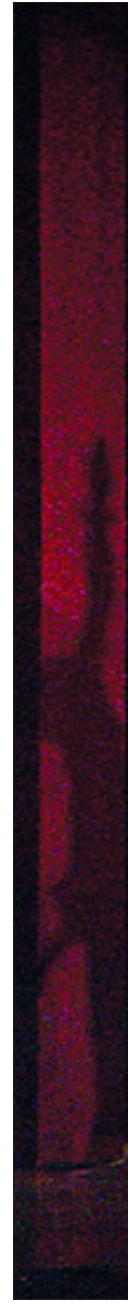
"Working with Norwegians was a long process that required dedication and care," Qiao said. For the professor, the artistic undertaking was an intercultural collaboration. To meet the standards of the Ibsen Year Tour, Teater Ibsen staff came to Beijing four times last year to discuss various details of the stage design. Everyone finally came to this agreement: sew the different paper cutting graphs into frames of transparent material, which will then be hung at different places on the stage, such as Nora's bedroom, their house and the children's room.



Nora and her husband



Scene 1: Nora and her children preparing for Christmas



Nora's varie



Dramatic m
by the fantas

Nora

redefine Ibsen classic



city of emotions interpreted by five dancers.

Photos by Yan Chao

Interpretation with dance

Although the Norwegians and the Chinese have hoped to work together for a long time, Teater Ibsen's decision to perform with the Beijing Modern Dance Company did not come through until two or three months ago.

Shi Xiaojun, one of the dancers from Beijing Modern Dance Group, who played one of Nora's souls on the stage said, "The most difficult part was the language barrier. The play is in Norwegian and the director spoke in Norwegian, so we needed to feel and understand the characters using our personal interpretation."

The whole performance unfolded chronologi-

cally, based on the original play, and lasted around two hours. Nordseth selected the dialogues to make sure it remained true to Ibsen's vision.

When the strong lighting hit the red and black paper cutting shields and the birdcages hanging from the ceiling, it created a soft, warm, rich and mysterious visual effect. In some scenes, to express Nora's feelings, four Chinese Noras came in to present a wealth of her other emotions.

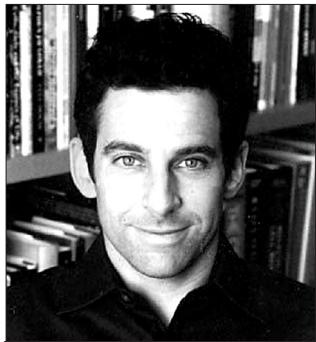
"What impressed me most was the beautiful stage and the female dancers' costume, which were made through traditional Norwegian knitting methods," said Alison Friedman, interna-

tional programming coordinator of the Beijing Modern Dance Company.

"The play was in Norwegian and there were two big screens with the scenes and dialogues in Chinese," Friedman said. "I was reading the Chinese first, then realized I would miss the performance. Then I just forgot about the words and focused on the dancing. I did not have to know what it was saying. It was two cultures eloquently expressing themselves by using a universal language – dance!"

Hunting for Nora will have a year-long tour in Norway in 2007.

moments heightened
stage design



By Sam Harris

112pp, Knopf, US\$10.17
(Amazon)

It's no secret that author Sam Harris sees many problems in modern America – a land where a recent Gallup poll suggests 53 percent of citizens believe in creationism; where a three-day-old blastocyst has more people willing to defend its human rights than a doctor who performs abortions has to defend his or hers; where a "moral majority" believes its myth is truth.

After publishing his first book, *The End of Faith*, Harris caught a firestorm of criticism from "true believers" that reaffirmed his fears the USA is in the middle of a moral and intellectual emergency even the Flying Spaghetti Monster can't solve.

"Atheism is not a philosophy; it is not even a view of the world; it is simply an admission of the obvious," Harris writes. "In fact, atheism as a term should not even exist. No one ever needs to identify himself as a 'non-astrologer' or a 'non-alchemist.' We do not have words for people who doubt that Elvis is still alive or that aliens have traversed the galaxy only to molest ranchers and their cattle. Atheism is nothing more than the noises reasonable people make in the presence of unjustified religious beliefs."

Aimed to give secularists a weapon with which to defend science and logic from the onslaught of publicly acceptable fundamentalism, *Letter to a Christian Nation* is more full of facts than of Harris's opinions. Harris writes that the human body is the ultimate example of how unintelligent the intelligent designer must have been.

"As embryos, we produce tails, gill sacs and a full coat of apelike hair. Happily, most of us lose these charming accessories before birth. This bizarre sequence of morphology is readily interpreted in evolutionary and genetic terms; it is an utter mystery if we are the products of intelligent design," he writes.

Perhaps most chilling is his commentary on the antagonistic role true believers play in protecting the future of this planet. Harris sees it as no exaggeration to say a significant chunk of the USA would see nuclear war as a positive – a sign Jesus will return soon to teleport them to heaven.

Uncompromising in his condemnation of religion, Harris sets out to prove that, more often than not, the atheists are the most moral, honest and humble people of all.

Letter to a Christian Nation

Letter to a Christian Nation

SAM HARRIS

Best-selling author of
THE END OF FAITH

Why was there a need to write this book?

Letter to a Christian Nation is Harris's direct response to the feedback he got. "The most hostile of these communications have come from Christians," he writes. "This is ironic, as Christians generally imagine that no faith imparts the virtues of love and forgiveness more effectively than their own. The truth is that many who claim to be transformed by Christ's love are deeply, even murderously, intolerant of criticism."

– Jean E. Barker, *The San Francisco Chronicle*

What is the goal of this book?

Harris, in his words, "set(s) out to demolish the intellectual and moral pretensions of Christianity in its most committed forms." A few of the topics he inveighs against include Christianity's claims to exclusive truth, the Ten Commandments, creationism and intelligent design, anti-abortion stances, opposition to HIV and HPV vaccines, biblical prophecies, and the problem of theodicy, how a good and all-powerful God can allow so much suffering. In sum, he seeks to "engage Christianity at its most divisive, injurious, and retrograde."

– Barker

What is so troubling about religious moderates?

Religious moderation is a relaxation of the standards of adherence to ancient taboos and superstitions. That's really all it is. Moderate Christians have agreed not to read the bible literally, and not read certain sections of it at all, and then they come away with a much more progressive, tolerant and ecumenical version of Christianity. They just pay attention to Jesus when he's sermonizing on the Mount, and claim that is the true Christianity. Well that's not the true Christianity. It's a selective reading of certain aspects of Christianity. The other face of Christianity is always waiting in the book to be resurrected.

– Truthdig interview with Harris

What does Harris hope moderates take away from his book?

As in his first book, Harris, who has a degree in philosophy and is finishing his doctorate in neuroscience, dismisses the faith of moderate and liberal Christians, acknowledging that they "will not always recognize themselves in the Christian I address." Indeed, he hopes that these Christians "will also begin to see that the respect they demand for their own religious beliefs gives shelter to extremists of all faiths."

– Barker

Are there any new points addressed in Christian Nation that weren't covered in Harris's last book?

Letter to a Christian Nation, like philosopher Daniel Dennett's recent *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*, and, reportedly, biologist Richard Dawkins' forthcoming *The God Delusion*, attempts to deconstruct religion from every possible angle. This small book adds little new to Harris's argument in *The End of Faith*. indeed, he repeats a number of his examples. Its strengths are the clarity of Harris's writing, his critique of religion's current entanglement in public policy and his continuing willingness to speak up about some very controversial ideas, even if they're difficult for others to hear.

– Barker

What was the experience of reading Christian Nation like?

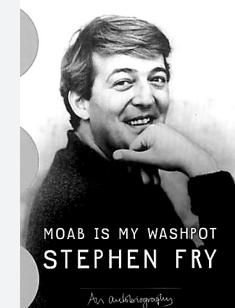
Reading Harris's *Letter to a Christian Nation* was like sitting ring-side, cheering the champion, yelling "Yes!" at every jab. For those of us who feel depressed by this country's ever increasing unification of church and state, and the ever decreasing support for the sciences that deliver knowledge and reduce ignorance, this little book is a welcome hit of adrenalin.

– Marc Hauser, Harvard College Professor, via samharris.org

(By Derrick Sobodash)

Local shelf

Moab is My Washpot



By Stephen Fry

376 pages, Soho Press, 120 yuan

In this best-written celebrity memoir of 1999, Stephen Fry, the intellectually intimidating archetypal Brit, tells his life story up to age 20. Often outrageous and always humorous, Fry is the darling of the media, appearing regularly in TV series and chat shows.

In this, his autobiography, he is frank about his early years, which included perpetual lying, expulsion from one of Britain's better known public schools, his discovery that he was homosexual, his theft and misuse of a friend's credit card, his imprisonment and, eventually, the discovery of his own personal road to Damascus.

Midnight All Day

By Hanif Kureishi

217 pages, Faber and Faber, 105 yuan

The book is an astonishing, darkly comic collection of new stories, in which Kureishi confirms his reputation as one of our foremost chroniclers of the loveless, the lost and the dispossessed. The characters are familiar in the cultural landscape of the nineties: frustrated and intoxicated, melancholic and sensitive, yet capable of great cruelty, and if necessary, willing to break the constraints of an old life to make way for the new.

Available:

Beijing Bookworm

Where: Building 4, Nan Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang

Tel: 6586 9507

Behind the Scenes at the Museum

By Kate Atkinson

Black Swan, 384 pages, 96 yuan

Behind the Scenes at the Museum is the story of Ruby Lennox, told in her own voice from the moment of her conception – an event heralded by a few grunts and groans from her father while her mother feigned sleep. Ruby and her family live above their pet shop in the shadow of York Minster. Theirs is a story of humdrum family life in the 1950s – endless housework, minor pccadilloes on the part of Ruby's father, homework, weddings and funerals. Interwoven with Ruby's story are those of her great-grandmother, her grandmother, uncles, aunts and cousins as they struggled through two World Wars.

Available:

Foreign Languages Bookstore

Where: No 235 Wangfujing Dajie

Tel: 6512 6903

(By Han Manman)

Last week we checked out three restaurants for friends and families to celebrate Christmas. Now here are three other places where you can dine with your sweetheart.

Christmas dinner with your honey

Dimly lit corner of love

By Tiffany Tan

If a romantic Christmas Eve is part of your plans this year, and money is not an issue, then you might want to go to Buffalo, a restaurant overlooking Houhai Lake. Granted, the name doesn't conjure up images of dark corners, stolen kisses and whispered sweet nothings, but once you get there, you'll soon forget any associations with beasts of burden that you might have made.

The moment you enter the place, you'll know this restaurant receives extra loving care from the management – from the sweet strains of live violin music in the air to the flickering candles floating on water-filled glass bowls to the flowers that decorate your dish.

This establishment isn't all about atmosphere, though. Their Homemade Roast Duck with Plum Sauce (150 yuan) is a wise choice if you're looking for a new twist to the traditional Peking Duck. The sauce gives the fowl a sweet-tangy taste. The Chicken Curry with Mango (120 yuan) is a step above other curry dishes with the addition of mango cubes: your senses come alive with the mixture of flavors. The Papaya Salad (60 yuan), which was merely grated papaya, can be a bit of a letdown for customers from the tropics, but was saved by the vinegar-based dressing.

The restaurant has a number of window-side seats with a nice view of the Lake.

On Christmas Eve, the restaurant will offer two five-course set meals specially designed for the night. The main dishes for Set A (360 yuan) are Crispy Fish Loin and Apricot with Sweet and Sour Sauce and Grilled Beef Shin Steak on the Stone. For Set B (488 yuan), it's Mozzarella Cheese and Fish Jelly with Berry Sauce and Grilled Beef Fillet and Mushroom Chopped with Red Wine and Berry Sauce.

Buffalo Club

Where: No 6 Lotus Lane (Hehua Shichang), Xicheng

Open: 9-2am the next day

Tel: 6617 1666; 6617 2146; 6617

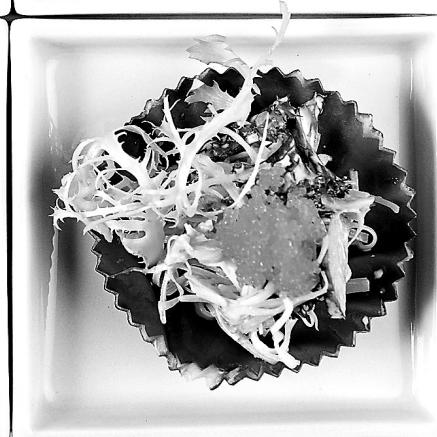
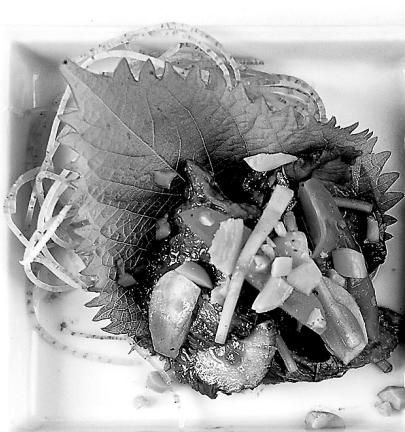
2242

Cost: 250-300 yuan per person (regular menu)



Decor inside Buffalo

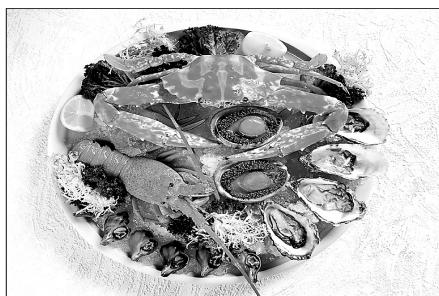
Photo by Tiffany Tan



Appetizers at Hot Loft

Photos provided by Hot Loft

Tradition with a twist



Crab vs. shrimp



Shrimp vs. golden fish

The US prime beef is also pretty appealing both in taste and presentation.

Unlike most places that just give you a small bowl of whatever dip they have, here you can actually make your own, from a choice of five different flavors from quite hot spicy soy sauce, garlic sauce, Thai style hot and sour sauce to traditional Chinese sesame sauce.

It's pretty rare to see a hotpot restaurant with a decent list of fine French wine, but at Hot Loft, you can find it. Chinese spirits are also available. Chinese businessmen will definitely order them, especially when treating a VIP client – which is still a traditional part of Chinese dining.

Hot Loft

Branch one: F5 of No 8 Gongti Xi Lu (the same building as Coco Banana Disco Club), Chaoyang

Open: 11am-early the next day

Tel: 6552 7992

Cost: 100 yuan per person

Branch two: No 4 yard, Gongti Bei Lu (behind the Comfort-Inn Hotel), Chaoyang

Open: 11am-11pm

Tel: 6501 7501

Cost: 100 yuan per person

Falling in love over spicy fish

By Gan Tian

Mala Youhuo, which means 'seduction of spicy food,' is a restaurant chain popular among white collars. Anyone who loves typical Sichuan food will enjoy the place. This cold Christmas, bring your sweet lover over where the food can make you hot.

I've tried its Xidan restaurant many times and no matter when I go, I've always needed to wait at least half an hour to be seated. I guess there's no need to say any more about what a crowd favorite it is.

The specialty dish here is Shui-zhuyu. The name is a bit strange: 'fish boiled in water,' but actually, you're eating fish boiled in oil. Last week, the restaurant came up with a brand new way of preparing this dish: a pot of boiled oil is first served on your table, then the chef comes around to cut up the fish in front of you, impressing you with thin even slices. Finally, the chef pours the meat slices into the hot pot and you see fireworks in front of you! This makes for a wonderful table ceremony. Spices are then added to the brew to eliminate the raw taste of fish. You can also take this dish's red peppers and oil home if you want to reuse them.

Other things to try are their spicy shrimp and spicy beef. If you or your companion don't have a stomach for hot food, then you can pass on this one, because only two things can happen – either your date will love you more or not want to see your face again!

Mala Youhuo

Dazhongsi Branch: No 13 Taiyangyuan District, Dazhongsi, Haidian

Tel: 8211 3276

Xidan Branch: F/7 Juntaip shopping mall (Grand Pacific shopping mall), Xidan, Xicheng

Tel: 6616 5850

Caibai Branch: No 81 Guang'anmen Nei Dajie, Xuanwu

Tel: 6318 4266

Dongzhimen Branch: B/1 Tianheng Building, No 46 Dongzhimen Wai Dajie, Dongcheng

Tel: 6416 6269

Open: 11am-10pm

Cost: 80 yuan per person



Spiced bamboo roots

Photo provided by Mala Youhuo

Holiday goodies

Bento & Berries (inside Kerry Center Hotel, Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang) celebrates its first Christmas with holiday goodies. From Yule Logs and Gingerbread to frosting and icing, lose yourself in this winter wonderland and experience complete indulgence. For reservations, call 6561 8833 ext 45.

**Buffet lunch**

The Coffee Garden is introducing a new buffet lunch for only 128 yuan. This offer includes hotpot, noodles, fresh seafood, local delicacies, western and Asian specialties and sweet temptations. For details, call 6561 8822 ext 40.

**Latin cuisine**

Sample Latin dishes at Caribbean restaurant (No 28 Dongzhimen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang) for only 298 yuan per person. Latin music played while you dine. For reservations, call 6417 2201.

**Hotpot lamb**

Eat at Yue Tang hot pot restaurant (No 1 Xidawang Lu, Chaoyang) and enjoy lamb for only 8 yuan per 500g until December 23. For reservations, call 6538 8065.

**Christmas dinner**

Spend Christmas dinner at Maitark Hotel (No 6 Xishuan Bei Lu, Haidian) for only 218 yuan for adults and 108 yuan for children under 12. Offer good until December 25. For reservations, call 8846 6777.

**Christmas buffet**

Have Christmas dinner buffet at Der Landgraf (Lan Te Bo Jue, 2 Pufang Lu, Fangzhuang, Fengtai) for 168-198 yuan per person until December 25. For reservations, call 6768 2663.

**Holiday wine**

Enjoy Centro's (No 1 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang) holiday basket including a bottle of champagne, a package of four specially selected wines and Centro's signature snacks at a gift price of 888 yuan. For reservations, call 6561 8833 ext 42.

**Quiche fix**

Pamper yourself with quiche during the bitter cold month of January at Kerry Center Hotel (No 1 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang). For reservations, call 6561 8833 ext 45.

**Dine at a discount**

Eat at Yu Xiang Yuan beef restaurant (No 123 Huizhong Beili, Yayuncun, Chaoyang) and enjoy 32 percent off the standard price (excluding beverages). For details, call 6493 5009.

**Nike shoes**

Selected Nike shoes at Sport 100 (Dongfang Guangchang, Wangfujing, Dongcheng) are for sale at a 30 percent discount. For details, call 8518 6748.

**Kappa items**

All Kappa sports brand items at Sport 100 (Dongfang Guangchang, Wangfujing, Dongcheng) are on sale until December 25. For details, call 8518 6748.

**Puma items**

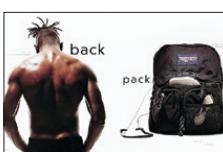
Puma clothes and shoes at Li Sheng sports equipment store (No 201 Wangfujing Dajie, Dongcheng) are 22 percent off until December 25. For details, call 6523 3707.

**Reebok goods**

Buy Reebok goods at Li Sheng sports equipment store (No 201 Wangfujing Dajie, Dongcheng) and get 20-30 percent off the sticker price. For details, call 6523 3707.

**Balenciaga goods**

Selected Balenciaga goods at Wangfujing shopping center (No 255 Wangfujing Dajie, Dongcheng) are 20 percent off until December 25. For details, call 6521 5960.

JanSport bags

JanSport sports bags are 10 percent off at Sport 100 (Dongfang Guangchang, Wangfujing, Dongcheng) until December 25. For details, call 8518 6748.

Discount at Watsons

Selected goods at Watsons chains around Beijing are 10-15 percent off until December 26. For details, call 6588 4944.

200 yuan voucher

Spend over 200 yuan at Fuchengmen Hua Lian shopping mall (No 1 Fuchengmen Wai Dajie, Xicheng) and get a voucher worth 200 yuan, until December 25. For details, call 8837 1188.

Discount on workout

Register at Havana gymnasium club (No 3 Binhe Lu, Andingmen, Dongcheng) until December 24 and get 30 percent off the regular price. For details, call 8421 8860.

(By Terrence Lu)

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or call: 6590 2626

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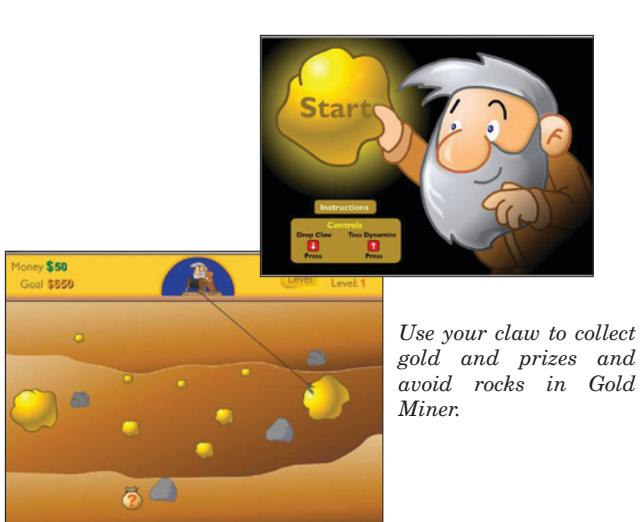
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By He Jianwei

With the November 19 launch of Nintendo's Wii remote, a new round of console wars has sparked off this winter. Unfortunately, office workers cooped up at their desks all day don't usually have time to enjoy console games. However, with online flash games, there's hope for entertainment in the office!

Beijing Today will introduce game websites, and addicts and the games they enjoy.



Use your claw to collect gold and prizes and avoid rocks in Gold Miner.



ALL WORK AND NO PLAY

Game Websites

Gaame.cn:

Gaame.cn popped up last month to provide a web collection of the latest flash games. Yang Guang, a graduate student from Chongqing, is one of the site's webmasters.

Before its current incarnation, Gaame.cn was a blog written by Luo Shuiyin, another person who was in charge in August. "Before I met Luo Shuiyin, I surfed the Internet regularly searching for flash games. They're a great, quick distraction that doesn't require much brain power to enjoy," Yang says.

Yang turned over the website to Luo, and provided him with a source of flash games. The two bought a new domain name in November. Today, both are in charge of game updates and website maintenance.

The RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed of Gaame.cn has had as many as 140 subscribers in the past month. "If our website is updated, readers subscribing to the RSS feed will know immediately. We're satisfied with the numbers so far – they're impressive for such a new website," Yang says.

The most popular flash game on Gaame.cn is a game called

Scribble that the website says emulates the play style of the Nintendo Wii. Players play by using the mouse to draw in new paths to keep their "blobs" alive. The game is available at gaame.cn/2006/12/16/scribble.html.

"It has changed traditional gameplay concepts. The traditional way we controlled characters was fairly simplistic, but in this game, players can control anything they want just by drawing," Yang says.

Even compared with FPS (First Person Shooter) games like *Counter-Strike*, flash games are still attractive. "Although the interface isn't as beautiful as traditional PC games, their amusement value isn't any less. As long as people are tired and bored at work, flash games will be around to provide them with a fun distraction," Yang says.

Small Games Club Forum: Wang Xin, an Internet technician, established the Small Games Club forum in March 2005. "We defined 'small games' as downloadable games designed for offline play," Wang says.

Last year, Wang found many people preferred small games to traditional PC games. He registered space on the Internet for

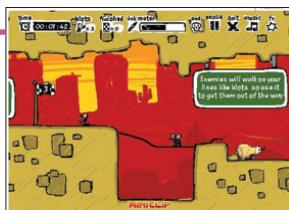
people to play and share these games. "The players could talk about what games were good, what games were bad, talk about how to get through areas where they got stuck and share new games," Wang says.

Wang recommends the game *Believe in Santa*, a strategy game. It can be downloaded from 5025488.net/bbs/viewthread.php?tid=38846

"The interface is bright and colorful. Being able to make money in the virtual world is a great way to fulfill dreams of owning your own business," Wang says.

"Small games are suitable for office workers," he says. "Players can easily download the games and pick up how to play them. They have a very easy learning curve, and are a great distraction from boring, repetitive work."

Wang has as many as 50,000 forum members, with 70 percent of registered users being male, according to forum statistics.



Guide your blobs to safety in Scribble.



Help children to Believe in Santa by making their gifts in Santa's lab.



Bow-master Prelude puts you in charge of defending a castle against medieval hordes.

Game Addicts

Liang Bo

Position: Freshman majoring in Architecture
Favorite game: *Bow-master Prelude*

Quote: "I was surprised to see a flash game that's actually complicated!"

Link: gaame.cn/2006/12/10/prelude.html

Pu Zhidong

Position: City planner
Favorite game: *Gold Miner*

Quote: "It's simple and interesting, and it's a good way to kill time."

Link: gaame.cn/2006/08/02/gold-miner.html

Luo Shuiyin

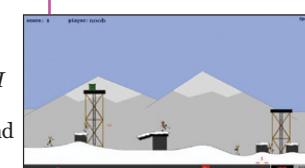
Position: City planner
Favorite game: *Gun-master Onslaught II*

Quote: "I love FPS games. This edition is more challenging, with more weapons and more enemies."

Link: gaame.cn/2006/11/19/gunmaster-onslaught-2.html

Other game sites

game.com.cn
dailymoviemaster.com
play-free-online-games
milkandcookies.com
flashaddictivegames.net

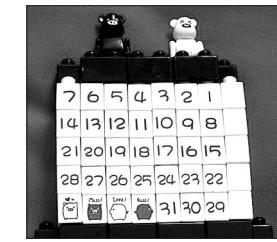
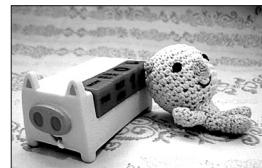


Collected weapons and blast baddies in *Gun-master Onslaught II*.

By Gan Tian

"I'm sitting down here, watching the days passing by, thinking about you," goes Sandy Lin's version of *I'm sitting down here*. When I was writing this week's shopping page, I suddenly realized what she means: she's looking at a calendar her lover gave her. At the end of the year, you need a fresh perspective, and you can find one in these 2007 calendars!

Watching the days pass by ...



1 Tezuka characters calendar

You probably have no idea who Tezuka Osamu is, but I'm sure you know Astro Boy, the little robot hero of our childhood. Tezuka is Astro Boy's creator, and the creator of many other characters. You can pretend to be Astro Boy in January and turn into The Three-Eyed One (*Mitsume ga Tooru*) in February. Crazy! Buy a Comicfans magazine and get the calendar for free.

Available: Every magazine booth
Price: Free with this issue of Comicfans

2 Pinko 2007 calendar

Switch it three times a day; the only change is that in this calendar, there are cards in each corner. Tear those boring days away each time you switch!

Available: shop33269731.taobao.com
Price: 17.8 yuan

3 Monokuro Boo DIY calendar

Monokuro Boo is a famous Japanese brand featuring a couple of black and white pigs. This time they appear in a DIY calendar. What's DIY? Only the "days" marked on each brick, so you must arrange them

yourself every month. I hope carrying those little pigs with you every day doesn't make you stupid. The best part is you'll never need to buy another calendar again.

Available: Doggie Shopping, No 45 Xisi Bei Dajie, Xicheng

Price: 49 yuan

4 Snowman Advent calendar

It may be late for Christmas, but I'm still recommending it because it's so cute. The calendar has twenty-four squares for you to put candy in. Each day, you open one door and eat the candy inside, and the last day, you get to open your Christmas gifts. Isn't it interesting?

Available: A56, F/5, Huawei Shopping Center, Xidan

Price: 18 yuan

5 Spin-the-wheel calendar

When Kylie Minogue sang, "I'm spinning around!" I bet she was promoting this calendar. Buy it and pretend you're on *The Price is Right* every day.

Available: shop33269731.taobao.com
Price: 17.8 yuan

6 White-black pigs calendar

Oh no! Pigs again! It occurred to me next year is the year of the pig in *Shengxiao*. It may bring good luck. This year, may God give me a young, pretty, hot pig ... err, girl, I mean.

Available: Doggie Shopping, No 45 Xisi Bei Dajie, Xicheng

Price: 10 yuan

7 Pink pig DIY calendar

More pigs ... this one doesn't have any eyes. You need to switch it three times to keep your days clear: year, day and month. If there's a chance of you getting confused about whether it's 2007 or 1007, this calendar may not be for you.

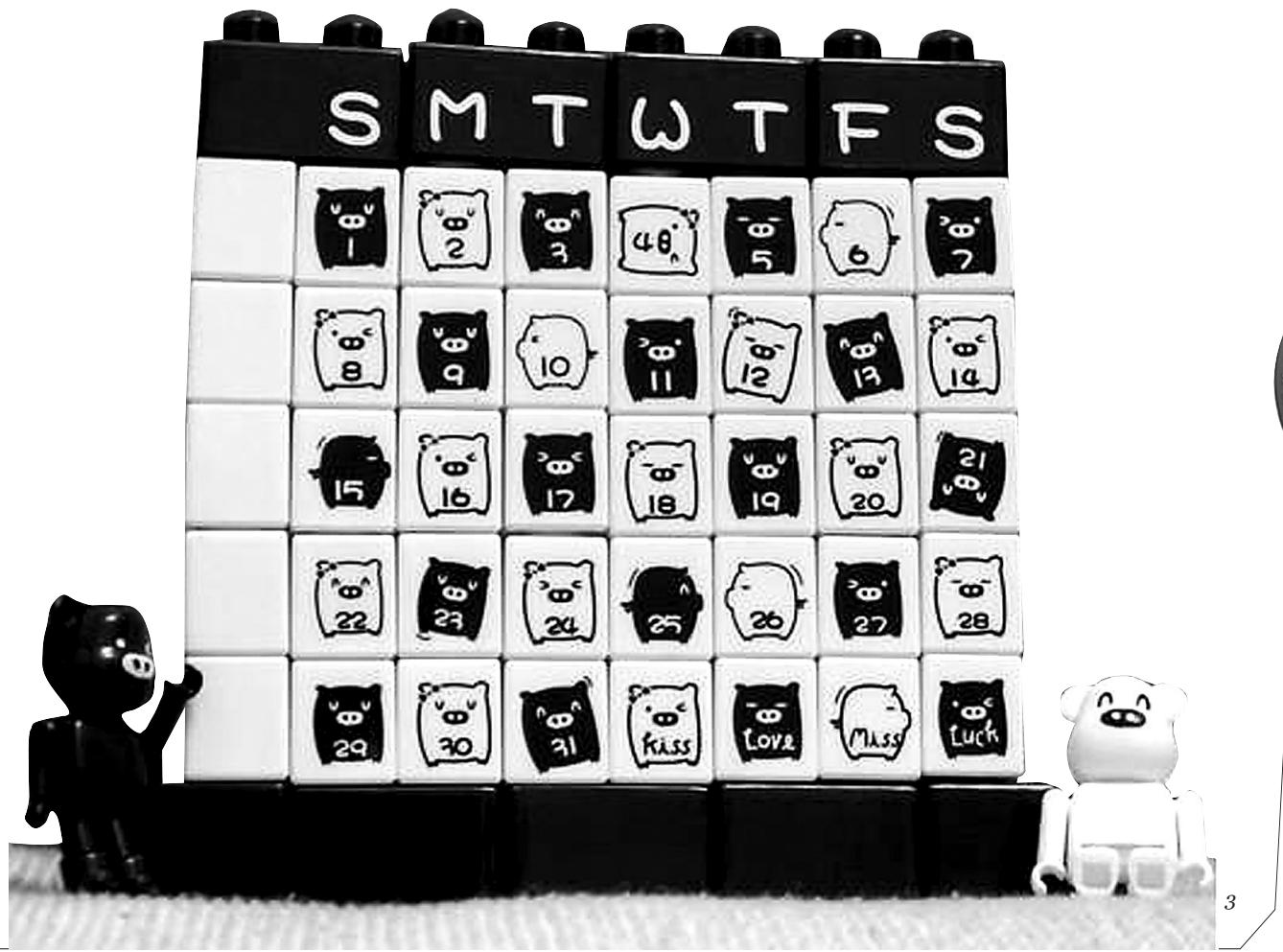
Available: A56, F/5, Huawei Shopping Center, Xidan

Price: 15 yuan

8 Yellow knife calendar

Doesn't it look like a Swiss army knife? With this calendar, maybe you can act on those feelings whenever you feel "today is killing me."

Available: shop33269731.taobao.com
Price: 17.8 yuan



Photos by Gan Tian

Wrap up for winter, health

By Gan Tian

When I saw my friend Xue Ming at work in Beijing University Third Hospital, he was wearing a black-and-white striped scarf very strangely.

He circled the scarf three times around his neck and tied a big knot in the back. I told him it made him look like a ghost and asked why he wore it that way. He said, "It's good for your health. The way you wear a scarf makes a big difference in your overall health, didn't you know that?"

To be honest, I'd never imagined scarves had any use beyond keeping out the cold, but Xue passed some advice on to me; and now I'm passing it on to *Beijing Today's* readers.

Two knots to keep balance

Zacharey Zhang, another schoolmate of mine, always carried a heavy schoolbag when he was in grade school. He only carried his bag in his right shoulder, thus making his left shoulder higher than the right one. This way will lighten this problem:

Step 1: Wrap the scarf once around your neck so both ends are in front of you; make sure the ends are the same length.

Step 2: Tie a knot in the scarf that is lower on the side of your higher shoulder.

Step 3: Tie a knot in the scarf that is higher on the side of your lower shoulder.

Notice: Do not put these knots under your coat. It will make you look fat and ugly.

A back knot makes for a nice butt

Girls dreaming of having a curvier posterior will love this one. Knotting your scarf behind your neck gives your back a point of support. By holding up your head, it helps keep you in the proper posture for walking. If you do it for a long

enough time, it will eventually benefit your backside.

Step 1: Wrap the scarf once around your neck so both ends are behind your back.

Step 2: Tie a simple knot behind your head where the ends meet.

Notice: Make sure no one comes up and unties the knot – you don't have eyes in the back of your head!

Front knot to alleviate neck pain

Xue told me keeping a 177-degree angle between your back and the nape of your neck can prevent neck pains. This is a great way to tie a scarf for people trapped in front of an office computer all day long.

Step 1: Wrap the scarf once around your neck so both ends are in front of you.

Step 2: Tie a knot under your chin where the ends of the scarf meet.

Step 3: Make sure the knot supports your chin and lifts your neck up, tilting your head to make a 177-degree angle with your back.

Notice: This is the most common way to tie a scarf, and also the most effective way to keep your neck healthy.

Tips on wearing scarves for health

1. Before worrying about health, you need to make sure you don't make yourself look stupid. You would never want to wear a scarf during summer for "health" reasons.

2. There are different kinds of scarves: short and long, silk and wool. Each has a different way of wearing it. You have to choose a length and material you consider suitable.

3. Stick to wearing your scarf only one way. It will be a long time before you see any real health benefits from the way you choose to wear your scarf. It may be tough if you're a man of a hundred fashions, but keep at it!

4. Ignore all my previous advice if you have a beautiful neck.



An icy plunge into better health



By Huang Daochen

Some people bundle up when Beijing's ripping winds stab their skin full of needles and start their nose dripping.

Others jump into a lake full of icy-cold water.

If you prefer to laugh in the face of hypothermia, winter swimming may be for you! The wonderful activity can temper the body and increase energy levels.

Good news

Statistics show that among winter swimmers, the rate of developing colds is 60 percent lower than non-swimmers, and for other diseases, 30 percent lower. As a therapy, winter swimming can heal multiple diseases, including high and low blood pressure, tubercu-

losis, pancreatic diabetes, chronic gastrointestinal disease, inflammation in the genitals and more, Yang Jianhua, a professor from Beijing University Health Center, says.

"I never caught the flu once in all these years," Xie Jun, a retired teacher from University of Science and Technology Beijing who has insisted on winter swimming for decades, said. In March last year, he was hit by a car and went into a coma for 13 days. His family members thought that he would spend the rest of his life in a hospital bed.

However, only one month after he was discharged, he returned to the pool again. Now he is healthy and eats whatever he wants. "If I didn't say I was hit by a car, could you tell?" he asks.

Another man, surnamed Han, started swimming last July. Now he goes for a daily dip, no matter if it's winter or any other season. He suffered from diabetes for many years, a complaint now allegedly cured by winter swimming.

"Winter swimming is useful to promote blood circulation, and to combat loss of energy or exhaustion. I think that is the reason it can cure so many diseases," Yang says.

Cold procedures can be performed both as a part of special training, and every day in the morning or in the evening after work to relieve fatigue, as well as for cases where people lose "inner harmony."

Not a panacea

Winter swimming has saved many people with terminal diseases, including cancer, Yang said. There are many well-known clinical cases of quick recovery through swimming. "But it is not a panacea," Yang says. For example in cases of chronic diseases, cold procedures do not always produce positive effects. If a patient's body doesn't have any energy left to trigger through submersion, then he or she should be treated with high temperature baths instead.

Fit for the cold

Even in therapeutic use, there

are few constraints to winter swimming. "It's the swimmers' 'inner preparation' that matters most in winter swimming," Yang says. Nowadays, most of the swimmers are senior citizens and those who frequently fall ill, but Yang recommends winter swimming to young people too.

Warming up

The necessary warm-up exercises aside, any dips into the cold water require a lot of mental preparation, Yang says. For example, if you plan to pour cold water on your body, you should submerge your wrists first. Then you wash your face and feel the freshness entering your body. Spill few handfuls of water on your head and then you may be ready to take the plunge.

Fans of winter swimming do not necessarily associate ice hole swimming with the sauna, though many enjoy a hot sauna before and after the cool swim, Yang says. It's not recommended to go from one extreme to the others; you

always need to give your body time to adjust to the middle temperature. Rapid temperature changes put stress on the heart and the change in blood pressure fast enough to make you dizzy.

Things to be aware of

Temperature

Water over 8 °C (about 46 °F) does not cause a boost in energy levels, and swimming in it is less effective. People without any training may even catch a cold.

Before jumping in

Never jump in headfirst! Even getting your head wet is a bad idea – it can cause heat loss and hypothermia. The temperature change speeds up the metabolism, so swimmers should drink plenty of hot fluids beforehand.

Beginners

Do not try winter swimming alone: always bring a friend to help in case something goes wrong. Inexperienced winter swimmers should go to public swimming areas like Yuyuantan and the Summer Palace.

Beijing's puny artificial slopes can be a serious disappointment to skiing fans trapped within the suburban hills. However, if you head northeast into Heilongjiang, Jilin and Lianing provinces, you can find some natural slopes waiting for exploration.

Dongbei is China's coldest region with winter temperatures as low as -30°C. At least three of the region's slopes are worth the trek.

Enjoy real mountain skiing

Yabuli Ski Resort, Heilongjiang



The Yabuli Ski Resort is 195km east of Harbin, capital of Heilongjiang Province. The resort is a great place to test one's skills. Skiing down from its high-level trails will be an experience you can be proud of.

The highest point of the resort is 1,375m with an average temperature of -10°C. At times, this can dip as low as -40°C. November to April is the slope's best season.

Ski trails

The Yabuli Ski Resort has 11 mountain ski runs for a total of 27km. The smallest slope is three degrees and the steepest is 18 degrees. Yabuli is China's only resort so far to conform to international standards. Besides mountain trails, the resort has special

trails for high level, middle level and primary level ski fans, and langlauf trails.

Admission

10 yuan per person for entrance

Equipment rental from Monday to Thursday

Normal: 230 yuan per person for half a day; 380 yuan per person for a whole day

High quality: 240 yuan per person for half a day; 390 yuan per person for a whole day

Clothes: 50 yuan for half a day; 70 yuan for a whole day

Snowmobile: 60 yuan for ten minutes

Ski-Archery: 40 yuan for ten arrows

Professional coaching: 160

yuan for half a day; 240 yuan for a whole day (for one to two persons); 240 yuan for half a day and 360 yuan for a whole day (for three to six persons).

Tel: (0451) 5345 5126

Transportation

Take the city train from the Harbin Railway Station or a bus opposite the Station to Yabuli Town. Then take a mini-bus.

Take a mini-bus to the ski resort from Yabuli Railway station. It takes around 20 minutes.

Take a luxury bus from Harbin Railway Station to Yabuli Station. It takes around three hours and costs 80 yuan.

Changbai Mountain Ski Resort, Jilin

Changbai Mountain, located in Jilin Province, is one of the most famous mountains in China for its virgin forest and natural reserves. The Changbai Mountain Ski Resort is built in the virgin forest of the Changbai Mountain Natural Reserve.

The ski resort is about 500km from Changchun, capital of Jilin. It's 1,640m to 1,820m above sea level. The snow quality is similar to that of France or Italy. The average winter temperature from October to May is around -13.7°C.

Ski trails

The resort has two mountain ski runs that are a total of 3,000m long. The drop from highest to lowest end is 130m.

The No 1 run is at the Subalpine birch forests on the mountain's slope. It's 600m



long and 50-60m wide. The average slope is 20 degrees.

There's a 40m high jump at the end for athletes and ski fans.

The langlauf trail runs through the virgin forest with the total length of 5,000m.

Other facilities: skating stadium, hot spring swimming pool

Admission:

Skiing: 16 yuan per hour (including hiring skiing facilities)

Inside hot spring: 20 yuan per person

Outside hot spring: 10 yuan per person

Free coaching

Tel: (043) 3574 6088

Transportation:

People go to the resort from Changhun, Yanji or Antu in Jilin Province.

Many airlines provide regular air services.

Regular buses go from Antu and Yanji to the resort. Contact the Dujuan Hotel (043 3574 6099) in the resort to arrange transportation.



CFP Photos

Northeast Asian Ski Resort, Liaoning



ince capital.

The mountain slope varies from four to 60 degrees, and average temperatures hover around a nippy -12.6°C.

Ski trails and facilities:

The slopes are home to a mountain skiing ground, common skiing ground, training ground, snowmobile ground and a ski-sleigh ground.

The 100m bicycle ground, 100m ski-sleigh ground, 100m training ground and 400m snowmobile ground provide a nice environment for people looking for other

snow sports. There are also 700m long middle ski trails, 700m and 750m long high-level ski runs and 1,200m of comprehensive ski trails.

Admission:

Mountain skiing: 60 yuan per hour

Ski-sleigh: 5 yuan

Ski-bicycle: 30 yuan per hour

Snowmobile: normal 30 yuan; luxury 50 yuan

Ski-clothes: 30 yuan

The resort offers a 50 percent discount for skiers who bring their own equipment.

Tel: (024) 8977 8333

Transportation:

Specific public transportation lines:

Line 328, from Maluwan to Xinchengzi (6am-6pm)

Line 326, from Wu'ai Market to Xinchengzi (6:22am-4pm)

Buses:

You can take the 8am bus from Huaxiang Aikejia Supermarket or the 8:45am bus from Nongken Plaza to go directly to the resort.

(By Zhang Nan)



From left to right: Royal Castle Wawel, the Salt Mine, street performance in Krakow, Restaurant Chimera, Bon Apetti, St Mary's Basilica, Auschwitz (in Birkenau)

A month in Krakow

By Kenneth Dong

Krakow

I visited Krakow this July, the best season for seeing Poland. My first destination was the 'old town' with its historic buildings, including St Mary's Church. Next I went to the church where Pope John Paul II stayed while he was in the city. The former Pope is revered in Krakow, not only because he was Pope, but also because he grew up in Krakow and served local parishes.

Next I went to the 14th century medieval Wawel Castle just inside old Krakow. The royal family of Poland used to live here, and the castle is home to the largest collection of tapestries in Europe. They survived World War II due to the careful planning of the caretakers, who shipped all the tapestries to Canada.

The city offers immersion in classical Europe. Cherubs and gargoyles glare down from almost every ancient palace and townhouse – guarding the endless treasure troves culture. Krakow offers so many museums and galleries that art and history lovers will need many trips to the city to ever see them all.

Polish people are very friendly. There's no need to worry about communication as many of them speak English well. Few Chinese – or even Asians – are here, so they had great interest in China. I was often amused with their funny questions. They showed hospitality whenever I was lost. One time, a Polish boy named Krzysztof offered help and led the way himself.

If you'd like to enjoy fine Polish cuisine, try the Restaurant Chimera located in the medieval cellars of the old town. Engulfed in classical music and candlelight glow, you can enjoy the best Polish specialties: delicious hams, cheeses and home-made infusions of berries, herbs and fruits. I returned there to eat three times on my trip. I recommend the 'Boiled beef with horseradish sauce' and 'Fruit sorbet with whipped cream.' The waiters spoke fluent English and could explain anything the menu left unclear. The prices are very reasonable, and complimentary gifts and sweets are

a testament to Polish hospitality.

Restaurant Chimera

Add: Ul. Sw. Anny 3, Krakow

Tel: (0048) (012) 292 1212

Open from 1pm until the last customer leaves.

Krakow is also perfect as a habitation. People here lead a very leisurely life. Most shops are open from 10am to 5pm on weekdays, and closed on weekends, for entertainment plays an important part in people's life. In the special atmosphere of the beautiful and mysterious streets of the old town you will find everything you need to allow you to escape from everyday life, such as galleries full of exhibitions, cafes, pubs and restaurants.

Hotel recommended: Novotel Krakow Center

Add: Ul Tadeusza Kosciuszki 5, Krakow, Poland

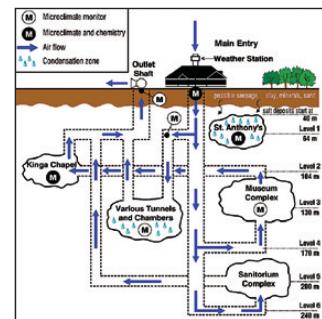
Tel: (0048) (012) 299 2900

Auschwitz

If you've seen Schindler's List, you must remember the town where the story took place: Auschwitz. It is a must-visit site for people who go to Poland. Luckily it's near Krakow, and with a solemn heart I started my tour. My tour included a visit to the brick-mortar barracks in Auschwitz I, and the extensive, depressing area of the large wooden extermination camp at Auschwitz II – Birkenau.

Admission to Auschwitz is free of charge, only a glass donation box is near the entrance. I noticed it was full of many kinds of money, euros, dollars, pounds ..., but it's a pity I didn't see Chinese yuan, so I put a ten yuan note into the box.

In Auschwitz I, what horrified me most was the glass display case. There are many enormous rooms piled high with the victims' shoes, hair, luggage, glasses and children's clothes. Tour groups shuffled along, inching their way through. I have never seen so many people at any historical site. The crowds were more appropriate for Disneyland.



The structure of the salt mine

a testament to Polish hospitality.

I remember a seemingly endless corridor of prisoner ID photos – literally millions of them. Some young, some old, some frightened, some weary, some defiant. They looked just like anyone else. The crematorium, death cells, barbed wire and silent watchtowers left a deep impression on me.

It's a serious journey and a deeply personal experience. Each exhibit is well preserved enough to let you feel the sense of despair the people here must have suffered. The place shows the anatomy of evil – both the obvious horrors and their links with the hidden, everyday evil. Children under 14 are advised not to visit the museum.

The Wieliczka Salt Mine

If you look at the list of most visited Polish sites, the Wieliczka Salt Mine is far from the top, but I found it no less magnificent than the Egyptian pyramids!

Wieliczka, a 700-year-old local salt mine, is amazing. As I traveled down hundreds of steps, I reached the first of three levels. There are nine levels in the mine, and I was more than 500 feet below ground. The caverns and tunnels were carved out of the salt and stretched for miles and miles. The mine was filled with enormous

sculptures and over 40 underground churches. The churches, crucifixes and statues were carved out of the salt. It is amazing to think how much time these miners spent creating such detailed chapels and sculptures.

Aside from being a tourist route, the underground corridors and chambers of the Wieliczka Salt Mine function as a magnificent venue for concerts, banquets, conferences, balls and sports events. It is even possible to celebrate a wedding here.

The salt mine is 10km from central Krakow and is an easy trip by taxi or car. There are also commuter trains and buses going there from many parts of the city. The mine is open to visitors from 7:30am-6:30pm April to October. In winter the hours switch to 8am-4pm.



Tourists and locals flock to the Sukiennice, Europe's oldest medieval trading hall.

Photos provided by Kenneth Dong



By Han Manman

Sino-German Transcapital Environmental Protection Engineering & Technology (Beijing) Ltd (SGT) is a young but promising enterprise, offering the most advanced DeNOx technology to Chinese coal-fired power plants. In addition, it provides economical air cleaning technology.

Young and full of promise

"At the end of their training period, the HR department gives interns a score based on three criteria: personality (40 percent), capabilities (30 percent) and potential (30 percent). Each department that asks for new people will be assigned those who match its requirements. Typically, we prefer someone who learns fast, and has a

strong drive and integrity. I don't think there's a big difference between college graduates and postgraduates. Not long ago, we chose two interns from a huge number of applicants to become our department assistant: one was a university graduate, while the other was a postgraduate. We wanted to train one of them for the posi-

tion of department manager. We had a very good impression of the postgraduate based on his interview, so we gave him the chance. During his internship, however, we became disappointed in his performance. He was quite arrogant in front of the younger interns, believing he was better than they were. At the time, we had an important

Dutch client. The postgraduate intern didn't ask for the correct spelling of his name and sent him a fax misspelling his name. The client became furious and thought our company didn't care about him. Similar mistakes happened again, so we decided not to offer that intern a job".

— Ning Qiong, HR manager of SGT

Shou Wen graduated from Shanghai International Studies University with a major in broadcasting and TV news. Shou started her internship in August, and this month, got a full-time offer as manager's assistant.

Aside from SGT, there were other groups that interviewed me and offered me a well paying job. Upon careful comparison and analysis, I decided on a different well-known company. But it was also then that SGT opened its arms to me. I tossed and turned all night, thinking about my dilemma. I eventually decided to start my first job at SGT.

There's a democratic atmosphere at SGT. From the very beginning, I participated in decision-making. I even succeeded when I asked the manager to rethink his decision on one matter.

SGT is an international company, with co-partners from three countries. So there are Chinese, English and German people in our office. I initially thought I had a special talent for languages because as a college freshman I got a CET-4 in English. But after only half a day at SGT, I changed my self-assessment. There were many other colleagues who spoke fluent English, even perfect German.

As part of our job, we meet with foreign clients from various parts of the world. Every client has his or her own personality and way of thinking. I do business as the Chinese do, so mistakes sometimes pile up. One manager told me I should adopt a more international perspective. He also said that work life is a continuous process of learning. As prominent Chinese educator, Tao Xingzhi, said, "Society is the best college for youth."



Comments from Ning: Shou made a good impression with her communication skills. She's talkative and proactive; the office is always filled with laughter when she's around. She works well both on her own and with a team. Her good command of English and ability to learn fast convinced us that she was worth taking on.

Tian Li graduated from Dong Hua University with a major in computer science and technology. Tian started his internship in July and got a full-time offer this month. He is now moving from the IT to the technology testing department.

Although SGT is not a big-name company, I believe it has a lot of potential. With a major that corresponds to the company's specialty, I really didn't find the intern exam hard. The one-on-one interviewers also made me feel at ease with their gentle manner.

I learned one unforgettable lesson during my internship. Although my boss was kind, he was dead serious when it came to work. Once, our company network encountered some problems, so my boss asked me to take a look. I thought it was only a small glitch, so I confidently told my boss that I could fix it within five minutes. While I was doing the repair, however, I found out that there was no way to solve the problem within five minutes! Well, my 'five minute' promise totally slipped my mind, but my boss certainly remembered. Five minutes later, he came up to me for a status report and I told him, "Wait a while." His face immediately hardened and he asked me how long he needed to wait. I said, a few minutes. He remained serious and asked me what that meant. I thought I had surely gotten into trouble, so immediately said, "Around ten minutes." My boss then asked me what "around" meant. I got a little scared then. Although he didn't seem angry, he remained stern. After I solved the problem, my boss's face relaxed as if nothing happened. Later, he called me in to his office and told me that it was important to guard what you say. From that day on, I never made any promises that I couldn't keep.

For those who are still in school, work is not as hard as you think. You need to grab a good opportunity if it's presented to you, because some opportunities only come your way once. Don't be so worried about your strengths or weaknesses; many bosses care more about a person's learning curve than certain talents you only exhibit once or twice.



Comments from Ning: Tian's definitely a fast learner. At the very beginning, he was with our IT department and no one expected him to learn how to conduct a CFD test. A few times, he was asked to work with technical staff to monitor the testing process on the screen, and to our surprise, within three months, he could do the work on his own. Although he won't graduate until next year, we've already decided to hire him and give him special training.

Yu Tianhua graduated from Tianjin Normal University with a major in journalism. Yu started her internship in July and got a full-time offer this month as the assistant to the project manager.



I had internship experience at TV and news stations but never at a foreign company until SGT. Because I like learning new things, I applied to become an intern at SGT.

Although choosing a big established company would be more beneficial to fresh graduates, I discovered that in these corporations, it's difficult to make a mark. You'll just get swallowed up in the bureaucracy. SGT is a mid-sized and relatively young company, but it provides

more space for the staff to develop. We don't need to adhere to as many rules and regulations, and we feel like our voice is being heard.

During your internship, you'll be asked to do many odd jobs. However, sometimes, your boss will assign you an important task which will really challenge you.

Once my boss asked me to accompany two foreign colleagues on a three-day tour of Beijing. Although I studied English in school, I was hardly fluent in the language. At work, there weren't a lot of opportunities to speak English, and I mostly practiced on my own. I was so nervous during those three days. I accompanied them to see many places like the Great Wall,

Tian'anmen Square, the Summer Palace and the hutongs.

Each day seemed like an eternity. Sometimes, I didn't even know what I was saying in my haste to explain something. Every night, I stayed up until midnight to prepare my commentary for the next day's activities. I also needed to make sure that I kept our guests safe. Those three days were exhausting, but I learned a lot. First, I made use of my organizational skills and learned about putting myself in other people's shoes. Second, I improved my English and became more confident communicating with foreigners. Third, I made new foreign friends. That tour has been my most unforgettable experience since I graduated.

Comments from Ning: Yu is quiet, but is exceptionally good at organizing things. She has excellent writing and speaking skills and gets along well with her supervisor. As an assistant, those are highly desirable skills. Our marketing department also benefits from her promotional ideas.

Fancy becoming a menu translator?

By Chen Shasha

With the 2008 Olympic Games just around the corner, the Beijing Speaks Foreign Language Program, in cooperation with the Beijing Tourism Administration, evaluated the menu translations of three- and four-star hotels in Beijing. The project, which collected thousands of menu entries, took two months to complete. On Wednesday, the committee finally came out with their official translation.

The Beijing Speaks Foreign Language Program, however, is still planning to make further revisions as new input comes in. Wang Ying, an officer of the program, said they are now waiting for more suggestions from food specialists and native English speakers before they finalize the menu translation. Below is the abstract of the corrected menu. The complete list may be found at bjenglish.com.cn.

Comments or suggestions may be sent to bjenglish@vip.sina.com and chenshasha@ynet.com before December 29.

冷菜 (Cold Dishes)

- 拌豆腐丝
- 白切鸡
- 陈皮兔肉
- 川北凉粉
- 夫妻肺片
- 干拌牛舌
- 干拌顺风
- 怪味牛腱
- 桂花糖藕
- 老醋泡花生
- 凉拌金针菇
- Shredded Dried Bean Curd
- Plain Boiled Chicken
- Rabbit Meat with Tangerine Peel
- Bean Noodles in Chilli Sauce
- Sliced Beef and Ox Tongue in Chilli Sauce
- Ox Tongue in Chilli Sauce
- Pig's Ear in Chilli Sauce
- Spiced Beef
- Sliced Lotus Root with Sweet Sauce
- Peanuts in Vinegar
- Mixed Golden Mushroom and Vegetable

蔬菜类 (Vegetables)

- 木瓜炖百合
- 浓汤金华四宝羹
- 浓汤娃娃菜
- 芹香木耳
- 清炒/蒜茸各式时蔬
- 清炒/蒜茸西兰花
- 上汤扒娃娃菜
- 上汤鸡毛菜
- 上汤芥兰
- 上汤浸时蔬
- 双耳炒四季
- 松仁玉米
- 西红柿炒蛋
- 西芹百合
- 鱼香茄子
- Stewed Papaya with Lily
- Braised Four Kinds of Vegetables in Thick Soup
- Stewed Baby Cabbage in Thick Soup
- Sautéed Black Fungus with Celery
- Sautéed Seasonal Vegetables with Garlic
- Sautéed Broccoli with Garlic
- Braised Baby Cabbage in Superior Soup
- Braised Green Vegetable in Superior Soup
- Braised Kale in Superior Soup
- Braised Seasonal Vegetables in Superior Soup
- Sautéed Fungus and Assorted Vegetables
- Sautéed Corn with Pine Seeds
- Scrambled Egg with Tomato
- Sautéed Lily Root and Celery
- Eggplant with Garlic Sauce

主食、小吃 (Staple Food & Local Snacks)

- 肉末烧饼
- 肉丝乌冬面
- 三丝春卷
- 水饺
- 松子叉烧酥
- 汤圆
- 豌豆黄
- 八宝饭
- 白粥
- 鲍鱼丝金菇焖伊面
- 鲍汁海鲜烩饭
- 鲍汁海鲜面
- 北京炒肝
- 北京鸡汤馄饨
- 北京炸酱面
- 冰糖银耳炖雪梨
- 菜盒子
- 菜肉大馄饨
- 菜肉饺子
- 参吧素菜卷
- 草菇牛肉肠粉
- 叉烧包
- 海鲜春卷
- 海鲜锅饼
- 煎包
- 煎蛋卷
- 煎饺
- 煎酿鲜茄子
- 煎什菜粉果
- 酱鸡腿拉面
- 酱油肉丝炒饭
- 椒盐花卷
- 金银迷你馒头
- 金玉水饺
- 锦绣糯米鸡
- 酒酿元子
- Minced Meat with Sesame Cake
- Japanese Noodles with Shredded Pork
- Deep-Fried Spring Rolls
- Dumplings
- Baked Barbecued Pork Pastry with Pine Nuts
- Sweet Glutinous Dumplings
- Pea Flour Cake
- Eight Treasure Rice
- Plain Rice Porridge
- Stir-fried Noodles with Mushrooms and Shredded Abalone
- Boiled Seafood and Rice with Abalone Sauce
- Seafood Noodles with Abalone Sauce
- Stir-fried Liver Beijing Style
- Wonton in Chicken Soup
- Noodles with Bean Paste
- Stewed Sweet Pear with White Fungus
- Stir-fried Crispy Cake Stuffed with Vegetable
- Pork and Vegetable Wonton
- Dumplings Stuffed with Minced Pork and Vegetable
- Sweet Dumplings Stuffed with Cream and Mixed Fruits
- Steamed Rice Noodle Rolls with Mushrooms and Minced Beef
- Barbecued Pork Bun
- Deep-Fried Seafood Spring Rolls
- Pan-fried Seafood Dumpling
- Fried Dumplings
- Omelet
- Fried Pork Dumplings
- Fried Eggplant Stuffed with Pork and Shrimps
- Fried Vegetable Dumplings
- Noodles with Chicken in Soy Sauce
- Stir-fried Rice and Sliced Pork in Soy Sauce
- Steamed Bun Roll with Salt and Pepper
- Steamed and Deep-Fried Mini Bun
- Dumpling Stuffed with Corn and Meat
- Steamed Chicken with Rice
- Boiled Dumplings in Fermented Glutinous Rice

- 咖喱蒸牛肚
- 咖喱牛肉酥盒
- 口蘑菜胆
- 口蘑煎蛋卷
- 拉面
- 腊肉炒饭
- 腊肉西芹卤汁面
- 辣酱蒸鲜鱿
- 醪糟汤圆
- 醪糟鸡蛋
- 莲子红豆沙
- Steamed Ox Tripe with Curry
- Curry Beef Puff
- Stir-fried Vegetable and Mushrooms
- Mushroom Omelet
- Hand-pulled Noodles
- Stir-fried Rice with Preserved Ham
- Noodles with Preserved Ham and Celery
- Steamed Squid with Chili Sauce
- Glutinous Rice Balls in Rice Wine Soup
- Poached Egg in Rice Wine Soup
- Sweetened Red Bean Paste and Lotus Seeds Soup
- Crispy Durian Cake
- Pan Fried Turnip Cake
- Steamed Bun Rolls with Sesame Paste
- Fried Glutinous Rice Balls with Sesame
- Cream of Peanut with Water-chestnut
- Steamed Rice Rolls with Shrimps and Water Chestnut
- Steamed Bun Stuffed with Preserved Vegetable
- Fried Noodle with Seafood
- Noodles with Pork Ribs
- Steamed Rice
- Herbal Jelly Served with Honey
- Steamed Barbecued Pork Bun
- Barbecued Pork Puff
- Rice Porridge
- Chicken Fricassee Vol-au-vent
- Noodles with Mushroom
- Beef and Mushroom Quiche
- Glutinous Rice and Cream Dumplings
- Deep Fried Milk Custard Dumplings
- Steamed Bread with Milk and Egg
- Golden Corn Pancake
- Pumpkin Puff
- Pumpkin Dumplings
- Pumpkin Porridge
- Stir-Fried Rice Noodles with Beef
- Dumplings Stuffed with Beef and Scallion
- Rice with Beef
- Fried Dumpling Stuffed with Beef
- Hand-pulled Noodles with Beef
- Steamed Dumplings Stuffed with Beef
- Glutinous Rice Rolls
- Hand-pulled Noodles with Spare Ribs
- Fried Rice and Pickled Vegetables
- Utopia Prawn Dumplings
- Preserved Egg with Minced Pork Congee
- Stewed Rice Noodles with Beef in Broth
- Fried Sponge Cake
- Steamed Rice Rolls with Vegetables

饮料 (Soft Drinks)

- 冰茶
- 冰红(绿)茶
- 冰奶茶
- 港式奶茶
- 巧克力奶茶
- 冰巧克力奶茶
- 百香果汁
- 冰果汁
- 菠萝汁
- 菠萝果茶
- Iced Tea
- Iced Black (Green)Tea
- Iced Milk Tea
- HK Milk Tea
- Chocolate Milk Tea
- Iced Chocolate Milk Tea
- Passion Fruit Juice
- Chilled Juice
- Pineapple Juice
- Pineapple Tea

甜品 (Dessert)

- 蝴蝶酥
- 酒酿圆子
- 杏汁芦荟木瓜
- 京味什锦甜食
- 莲子百合红豆沙
- 椰丝糯米糍
- Butterfly Cracker
- Glutinous Rice Dumpling in Sweet Rice Wine
- Papaya with Aloe and Almond Juice
- Traditional Assorted Sweets Beijing Style
- Sweetened Mashed Red Bean Soup with Lotus Seeds and Lily
- Stuffed Glutinous Rice Balls with Peanut & Sugar



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Friday, December 22

Exhibition

Shi Jinsong Solo Exhibition



Where: Platform China Space B, Zone A, 319-1 East End Art, Caohangdi Village, Chaoyang

When: Tue-Sun 11am-6pm, until February 3

Admission: Free
 Tel: 6432 0169

Brown Pearl Collection Show featuring Emperor Watch and Jewelry

Where: B1/F, China World Trade Center Shopping Mall, 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang

When: Daily 10am-10pm, until December 31

Admission: free
 Tel: 6515 8049

Movie

Luxury Car (Jiang Cheng Xia Ri)



A country schoolteacher reaching retirement goes to Wuhan in search of his only son. His dying wife has requested to see the boy one last time. He is met by his daughter, Yanhong, who works as an escort in a karaoke bar. Yanhong introduces him to a policeman who agrees to help him find his son. The two become fast friends. Yanhong also presents to her father her boyfriend who drives a luxury car. When the four meet, the old policeman recognizes the boyfriend as a man he arrested over ten years ago.

Where: French Culture Center, 18 Guangcai International Apartments, Gongti Xi Lu, Chaoyang

When: 8pm
 Admission: 10-20 yuan
 Tel: 6553 2627

Outdoor

White Christmas: Harbin Tour and Yabuli Skiing

Where: City tour of Harbin including Russian style architecture and ice sculptures. A day and a half at the Yabuli Ski Resort: half a day at the beginner's slope and a full day at the mountain ski field.

When: Take a night train from Beijing on December 22 and return to Beijing on the morning of December 26.

Cost: 4,100 yuan
 Tel: 135 8168 2703



Saturday, December 23

Exhibition

Visible Invisible



Group exhibition featuring nine artists, including Tan Ping, Wang Guangle, Xu Hongming, Zhou Yangming, Chen Ruo Bing, Zhang Fan, Lin Yan, Tang Kaizhi and Li Yang.

Where: One Moon, inside Ditan Park, Andingmen Wai Dajie, Dongcheng

When: Wed-Sun 11am-6pm, until January 31
 Admission: Free
 Tel: 6427 7748

Movie

Brise-glace (Ice-breaker)



This documentary by three directors chronicles their two-week journey aboard a commercial icebreaker on the Bothnian Sea. The first episode, *Bateau-Givre (Frosted Boat)*, by Jean Rouch focuses on the beauty of the ocean and the ship itself. Titte Tornroth's *Hans Majestat Isbrytaren Frej* explores the human element of the voyage, while the eccentric Raul Ruiz constructs a first-person science-fiction narrative in *Histoire de Glace*.

Where: French Culture Center, 18 Guangcai Interna-

tional Apartments, Gongti Xi Lu, Chaoyang

When: 8pm
 Admission: 10-20 yuan
 Tel: 6553 2627

Music

Christmas Carnival

Fun party and games with live DJ music show.

Where: Henderson Center (Central Lobby), 18 Jianguomen Nei Dajie, Chaoyang

When: 6-10pm, December 23
 Admission: Free
 Tel: 6889 2887



Sunday, December 24

Exhibition

Xin Yi Oil Painting Exhibition



Where: New Art Center, No 136 Nanchizi Dajie, Dongcheng

When: Daily 9:30am-6pm, until December 31
 Admission: Free
 Tel: 6528 9103

Estranged - Hu Xiang-dong Solo Exhibition

Where: Gallery Beijing Space, 3818 Warehouse, No 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang

When: Daily 10am-6pm, until January 12



Admission: Free
 Tel: 8459 9304

Music

Zhou Yupeng and Left Right

A New Year's Eve party on Christmas Eve.

Where: 13 Club, No 161 Chengfu Lu (Lanqiyiing Bus Stop), Haidian
 When: 9pm
 Admission: 40 yuan
 Tel: 8262 8077

Outdoor

Training courses for skiing and snowboarding

Two Austrian instructors, Markus Hirnbock and Stefan Schild, and 50 or so Chinese instructors are opening training courses for skiing and snowboarding.

Where: Yuyang International Ski Resorts, Pingsan Lu, Pinggu

When: Daily 8:30am-5pm, until January 10
 Cost: 50 yuan per two hours
 Tel: 5869 3355



Stage in January, 2007

Music

2007 Beijing New Year Concert

Who: Beijing Symphony Orchestra

Where: Zhongshan Music Hall, inside Zhongshan Park, Dongcheng

When: 7:30pm, January 1
 Admission: 80-880 yuan

Vanderbilt Symphony Orchestra

Who: Vanderbilt Symphony Orchestra (US)

Where: Great Hall of the People, on the west side of Tiananmen Square, Xicheng

When: 7:30pm, January 1
 Admission: 80-1,180 yuan

Classical Chorus

Who: SK Chorus (Germany)

Where: Beijing Concert Hall, No 1 Beixinhua Jie, Xicheng

When: 7:30pm, January 5-6
 Admission: 80-680 yuan

China Symphony Orchestra 2006-2007 Season

Who: China Philharmonic Orchestra

Where: Beijing Concert Hall, No 1 Beixinhua Jie, Xicheng

When: 7:30pm, January 13
 Admission: 30-280 yuan

Richard Strauss Works

Who: China Philharmonic Orchestra

Where: Poly Theater, No 14 Dongzhimen Nan Lu, Dongcheng

When: 7:30pm, January 21
 Admission: 50-680 yuan

Dance

Swan Lake

Who: Russian Samara State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet

Where: Beijing Exhibition Theater, No 135 Xizhimen Wai Dajie, Xicheng

When: 7:30pm, January 1-2
 Admission: 120-880 yuan

New Year Ballet Concert

Who:

National Ballet of China

Where: Beijing University Concert Hall, inside Beijing University, Haidian

When: 7:30pm, January 1-2
 Admission: 150-380 yuan

Thousand-armed Guanyin

Who: China Disabled People's Performing Art Troupe

Where: Beijing Exhibition Theater, No 135 Xizhimen Wai Dajie, Xicheng

When: 7:30pm, January 24-25
 Admission: 180-1,280 yuan

Little Birch Tree Dance Troupe

Who: Little Birch Tree Dance Troupe (Russia)

Where: Poly Theater, No 14 Dongzhimen Nan Lu, Dongcheng

When: 7:30pm, January 28-31
 Admission: 120-880 yuan

(By Qiu Jiaoning)